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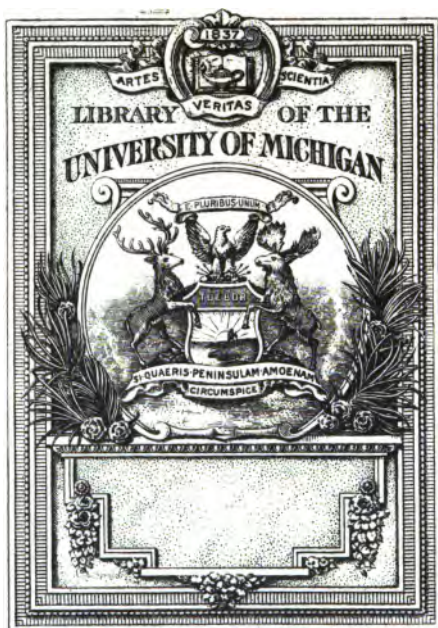
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# A FIRST PRIMER OF APOLOGETICS

BY

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To  
MY WIFE

### PREFATORY NOTE.

THE purpose of this little book is to give a thoroughly frank statement of the Christian argument as it shapes itself in the light of present-day knowledge and criticism. Unfortunately, it was not possible to cover the whole field within the limits of space at command. It is hoped that what is most essential has been given.

The first three chapters are introductory. The last words of Chapter III. sketch the course of the subsequent exposition.

The few notes added are meant principally for younger readers.

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## I

### CUSTOM AND REASON

IN studying Christian evidences, we are seeking to discover and exactly define the reason we have for believing as we do—the reason for our faith in Christianity—if one should not rather say, for our faith in Christ. We are studying and testing the grounds of our most sacred convictions. But we cannot very profitably discuss this deeper question unless we have first asked, What is the reason for our belief in other truths? There is no difficulty, perhaps, about facts which fall immediately under the cognizance of our own senses. It is generally conceded, and we may take it for granted as roughly true, that our senses afford a sufficient guarantee of such facts. But we believe a whole world besides these. What is the reason of such wider belief?

The first great reason for human belief that runs beyond the senses' warrant is tradition, or external authority—we believe because we are told. That is the system on which we all begin. If we were such young rationalists that we refused to take mother's word or the nurse's word—if even in babyhood we were resolved to 'prove all things' for ourselves—we should most probably fall victims to our premature scientific ardour. Our experiments would be too much for us. But the human child with all its faults is a trustful creature. Hence it is easy to amuse yourself—poor amusement, indeed!—by trying how many absurdities a little child will swallow. And hence, also, the human child

is embarrassingly apt to propound its own source of final certainty as a guarantee for others. A young man of my acquaintance, walking out with his nurse when a child of tender years, espied a new-comer to the town, and began to characterize him in a loud voice with the terrible frankness of infancy : ' That's Mr. So-and-so, Janet ; he's got a most unfortunate temper.' ' Oh, hush, hush, Henry ! you mustn't say such things.' '*Papa says so.*' He knew no higher authority ; and how should it ever be out of place to quote his oracle ?

Our own children begin life upon this system, and the backward, childish races never emerge from it. Where do they get their moral ideas, or their religious ideas, or such scientific ideas as they possess ? From tradition. The child is surrounded by older persons, who have far more knowledge and wisdom than he himself ; and the childish race feigns that its ancestors, who gave currency—or so it thinks—to the first tradition, were vastly wiser than any living man. Time has consecrated all their beliefs, their shrewdish guesses, their wildest follies. Livingstone's Makololo followers, who crossed with him to the West of Africa, could not believe what he told them about the ocean until they saw it for themselves. And then they were overwhelmed with bewilderment. ' We had followed our friend many months,' they said, ' believing what our fathers told us, that there is no end to the world, when suddenly the world said to us, " I am done ; there is no more of me." ' This is a picturesque and striking example of the savage's love of personifying ; it is also a good example of the obstinate reliance which he places upon the traditions that have come down to him from his forefathers.

Neither child nor savage finds it easy to begin thinking for himself. Hence at first it is keenly painful to encounter teaching which cannot be accepted. The labour of thought

is unwelcome ; heterodoxy, challenging our familiar orthodoxies, is an odious thing. Afterwards pure thinking may become the source of as keen a pleasure as is known to man. We may love speculative thought too well for our own good, placed as we are in a world where action is the first thing needful. But in early days all this life of thought is as remote from us as the back of the moon. We ought therefore to be very careful what books we put into the hands of our children. If they meet with strange religious and moral teachings, they may accept them from the force of habit, and that will be bad ; or with pain and conscientious effort they may reject them ; but that process, if it comes too early in life, is scarcely less bad. It does not answer to strain the delicate young powers of mind and conscience. They grow best in half-lights, in a healthy, instinctive obedience that asks no questions, and knows nothing of doubts. Even the great and good Dr. Arnold of Rugby is thought to have injured some pupils. His policy was to instil 'moral thoughtfulness'; the mechanism even of that healthy little animal the English schoolboy could not always bear the strain. Our children must not be too thoughtful. Let them rest while they may, under the shelter of a loving authority. Beyond a doubt, something similar was needful for primitive races of mankind.

But the time comes when thought must awaken, and the individual, or the race, must pass out of childhood, and put away childish things. Our young men, and probably even our thoughtful young women, must have their initiation into personal religious certainty through an ordeal of religious doubt. This is neither a thing to deprecate nor a thing to boast of. It is a natural appointment of God's providence, painful in itself and full of dangers, but most salutary to those who face it with an honest and good heart. If we have never doubted, we can hardly help the doubts of

others—unless by a perfect miracle of sympathy and of love ; but most of us need personal initiation. When the race as a race emerges out of thoughtlessness into thought, science is born. To break the yoke of custom must have cost the race even more pain and struggle than it costs the individual ; but the work was done for us long ago. Heroes did the work, sufferers paid the price ; now they are utterly forgotten, their very names are unknown. Henceforth the scientific spirit is the property of the whole race : we believe now not upon authority, but upon evidence. We ask for proof. We trust our own thoughts, and walk in the light of reason. By this method has been built up the splendid and ever-growing fabric of science. We know that science has already done great things for mankind, and we know, too, that science as yet is only in its infancy. Beyond the region of the physical sciences there lies the more debatable region of philosophy ; but we cannot refuse to allow the same method to be tried in all regions. Pure intellectual curiosity must do its uttermost ; disinterested love of truth is sure to help more than it harms mankind. Not the least among the charms of science is the universal currency of its results. A discovery made by one mind becomes the property of the whole human race. It is valid for all minds. All can verify it and test its evidence. When it is once satisfactorily accredited, all can use it without further personal verification.

We must beware, therefore, of trying to minimize the rational character of science. Some Christian apologists perplex people by insisting that authority—the authority of other men's belief—plays a great part in determining our personal belief to-day. No doubt that is true ; but what does it mean ? It means in some cases that we must be content with probable evidence when clear evidence fails. Often I can get nothing better to guide me than the know-

ledge that So-and-so recommended this route. Therefore I adopt the route so recommended, because I have rational evidence or testimony that So-and-so is a wise man, and because personal experience fails. Still, it may turn out that the route is, to my thinking, an odious one. Half-lights are better than complete darkness; and yet, for a reasonable man, on questions of taste or opinion, authority is never anything more tolerable than a link in a chain, or a stepping-stone, or a second best substitute. In other cases—in the pure, dry, bare, abstract light of science, where every personal element is excluded—one man may work for all men. If you are a skilled arithmetician, and add up figures for me, it would be waste of time for me to occupy myself in checking your addition. You have reached the result—human intellect has reached the result—and I believe it. Similarly I believe in gravitation, not on faith, though I may not understand the reasonings which support it, but on reason. My reason—human reason embodied in many great men—has proved it, and checked it, and tested it, and accepted it. Where men of science differ (*e.g.*, on the question of the world's age), I, as an outsider, suspend my judgment till they agree. But where they are certain, I am certain too. Reason, and nothing else, gives me this certainty.

Reason and science do much; can they do everything? Is there or is there not a third region, hitherto untouched in these remarks—a region belonging to faith?

One school of thought answers 'Yes,' in a great hurry, and *by faith means authority, custom, tradition*. The Roman Catholic and the High Churchman (at least, if he is pure, abstract High Churchman without foreign element) believes in tradition like any pagan. As a High Church nobleman said in controversy some years ago, he 'believes because he is told.' That is the nursery reason for faith—very suitable

for the nursery, and very unsuitable for grown men. *Who* told him? How did he know that the speaker was to be trusted? It is not 'proud reason,' as Newman would have said, that puts these questions; it is our manhood, our honesty. Religious faith in the pagan and the High Church senses is not a third region, but a return to the first region. It is not entrance upon a land of promise, but going back again into Egypt. The authority of an external institution like the visible Church is a substitute for evidence, where better evidence is unattainable, or it is a link in a chain of evidence. But if you take it by itself, it is a denial of evidence and a subversion of reason. Thus blind authority pioneers for scepticism. The earth rests on an elephant, and the elephant rests on a tortoise; but the tortoise rests upon the emptiness of infinite space. By-and-by the baselessness of the tortoise is found out, or the baselessness of the loud-tongued authoritative Church. Holy and reverend while it is God's servant, the Church as law-giver in matters of faith is a hollow imposture.

Yet a policy of blind faith is often fashionable and successful for the moment. The violence of scepticism awakens as violent a reaction; while that lasts, the least pure and least reasonable of churches appears the strongest.

If we are to defeat reaction, we must defeat it by progress; stagnation will not avail us. Rationalism cannot stand against this crafty authority; we need some deeper truth, some stronger faith.

## II

### REASON AND FAITH

IF our faith is not merely a part of our scientific knowledge, and if we cannot regard faith as blind assent to the teachings of a visible Church, upon what shall we say that faith rests?

Naturally the Protestant will answer, 'Upon the Bible; faith believes what the Bible teaches.' Now, it is certain that every Christian bows with reverence to the teaching of the Bible. If the Church deserves the reverence of a Christian man, still more does this holy book. Nevertheless, we found it impossible to accept the Church as the highest or the final teacher regarding the things of God; and, similarly, though we reverence the Bible, we have to search more deeply if we are to discover the ultimate basis of a Christian's faith. I believe the Bible; yes, but why do I believe the Bible? The question must be put and must be answered. In the answer to that question we discover the deepest of all our reasons for believing.

To put this otherwise, belief in the Bible may mean one of several different things.

If I believe in the Bible simply because I have always been taught by men to do so, then the Bible to me is *nothing but a tradition*, an external authority, blindly accepted. If I have no deeper reason for believing it, the Bible is to me a sort of fetish, and my faith is on all fours

with that of the pagan or the Ultramontane, or the typical High Churchman. I believe without any reason; I believe on the ground of custom, tradition, habit.

Very different is the early Protestant view. It teaches that one ought to believe the Bible because of the 'internal testimony of the Holy Spirit' bearing witness in and with the words of Scripture. The Reformers were too clear-sighted simply to oppose Bible authority to Church authority. The battle they were fighting was too keen and too perilous to allow them to argue as men do in an age when they have everything upon their own side, when they may lay down the law as they please, sure of meeting with indolent assent from those they teach. A great religious revival had made the Reformation possible; the Bible was a wonderful discovery to an age which had either not known it at all or had misread it in the light of Church traditions. Such an experience of the value of the Bible was appealed to by the Reformers when they asked men to read it with the help of the Holy Spirit, when they bade men accept it upon His authority. Unfortunately, later generations of Protestants soon abandoned this ground. Perhaps we may say that even the Reformers were unable to state their case in a perfectly clear and convincing way. They did not distinguish between the letter and the spirit of the Bible. It is quite true that the Spirit of God verifies the central message or the proper religious burden of Scripture. But we cannot reasonably hold that the Spirit of God guarantees to the reader the truth of historical statements, the correctness of scientific allusions, or the infallibility of subordinate doctrinal details. Hence it is not wonderful that Protestantism came to shift its ground. The Confession of Faith of the Westminster Assembly still holds firmly by the doctrine of the witness of the Spirit as the reason for believing Scripture. But the Shorter



Catechism of these divines—generally considered their masterpiece—says nothing about it. That epitome of Puritan theology appeals to the teaching of Scripture, and goes no deeper. May we not hold that even the great Puritans failed to appreciate at its true value their doctrine of the Spirit's witness? Hence the doctrine sank out of view, and had to be recovered within modern times in a more modern guise. When we speak of *Christian Experience* as our supreme evidence for Christianity, we are reviving the Reformation doctrine of the Spirit's witness to the Word of God.

When, however, that doctrine disappeared, Protestantism did not fall back upon mere authority or mere tradition. Protestant apologetics had recourse to rational arguments—to what is called the *external evidence* of Christianity, to the evidence of fulfilled prophecy, and, above all, to the evidence of miracles. This, therefore, is a third sense in which appeal may be taken to the authority of the Scripture. Such an appeal may mean blind reliance on tradition, or it may imply reliance upon Scripture as interpreted in Christian experience by the Holy Spirit, or it may imply reliance upon Scripture as guaranteed by miracles. If the last sense be adopted, faith is not so very different from science. It is the same process of rational inference applied to a new set of phenomena. Science deals with the facts which enter into the experience of all men, and tries to connect them together as manifestations of one great system of reality. It starts from universally admitted facts, and tries to push its inferences as far as they will go. Similarly, the eighteenth-century Christian apologetics placed all their reliance upon one unique set of facts—the Christian miracles—and tried to infer from them a guarantee of the truth of Scripture. The appeal is to the dry light of reason. Not the spiritual man, but the fair-minded scientific thinker,

is to judge of the evidences which God has attached to His revelation. Once again, perhaps, it is necessary to explain that we do not undervalue miracles. The Church is sacred, the Bible is sacred, miracle is sacred, yet God's appeal to us is something deeper than any of these, deeper than them all.

Accordingly, the Evangelical revival in the early part of the nineteenth century seeks, no less than Tractarianism seeks, for 'something truer and deeper than satisfied the eighteenth century.' In our own country one of the pioneers of this change was the saintly Scottish layman Thomas Erskine, of Linlathen. His 'Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of the Gospel' were among the earliest of many books in which his restless intellect and his ardent soul expressed themselves. An evangelical of the ordinary conservative type at the start of his career, Erskine travelled far in certain directions before his career was ended. He became one of the strongest champions of dogmatic universalism, teaching the absolute certainty that God's fatherly mercy would, sooner or later, win back all souls to Himself. Whatever we think of that belief, we must recognise that the changes in Erskine's opinions were never of the nature of concessions to rationalism; they were the fuller working out of certain moral and spiritual principles, which were dear to him as being intimately connected with his own Christian faith. And, as far as apologetics went, Erskine carried with him perhaps the greatest, certainly not the least orthodox, of the Evangelicals of his day, in the person of Thomas Chalmers. Formerly the mathematical mind of Chalmers had been content to boast of the resources which Christianity possessed 'in the strength of her external evidences'; later in life he attached a still greater value to those 'portable' evidences which were internal and experimental. That is to say, while still

relying on miracles as a Divine guarantee of doctrine, Chalmers came to rely still more upon the moral perception of what Christianity in itself was, upon the experience of what Christianity did for others, and for one's own soul.

Here, then, is the practical choice for Evangelicals. Is Christian faith assent to the evidence of miracles? or is it still more deeply and truly a personal experience of God's saving grace? Why do we believe? Because of mighty works which only the Most High could do? or because of the moral glory of God as seen by faith in the face of Jesus Christ?

The older view still has its attractions and its advocates. There are, indeed, changes. It has been found bad tactics to begin with pleading for the truth of all the Bible. In the first instance, the attempt is now made to prove (from miracles) that Christ is God's accredited representative. Next it follows that the Apostles and other Bible writers who spoke for Christ spoke also for God. Only at a later stage in this argument, after a man has long been convinced intellectually of the claims of Christ, is the coping-stone put upon his belief when he is led to admit the truth that all Scripture is Divinely inspired. Again, the argument is simplified and concentrated in another respect. As for the *Bible* is substituted *Christ*, so for *miracle* is substituted the definite cardinal miracle, *Christ's resurrection*. One thing at a time; one miracle at once. If the supreme wonder is admitted, others will certainly soon be accepted, and will add their quota to the weight of evidence. The argument is now recast—e.g., by Dr. Agar Beet—somewhat as follows: 1. The course of history requires such an event as the resurrection of Christ to account for the wide reception of Christianity, and the vast changes it set up. 2. But the stupendous miracle is well attested by good witnesses.

3. We must regard it, therefore, as the seal of God most High, accrediting whatever Christ teaches, either directly or indirectly.

This is an enviably clear course of argumentation. It might be foolish to object to it that it does not convince the men of science at whom it is aimed—what does convince the average scientific doubter? It would be dishonest to charge Dr. Beet, or others, with ignoring Christian experience. They are quite as zealous as those who take a different view in maintaining the necessity of personal faith and inward regeneration. Only they think that the logical framework of Christian evidences can be, so to speak, dissected out and presented in the abstract as a thing complete in itself, apart from the living tissues of Christian love and hope. They do not like calling upon the Christian heart to guarantee the processes of mind and brain. They wish heart and head to move upon two parallel lines—near, yet distinct. The scientific demonstration that Christianity is rationally true is to be kept aloof from those tremendous disturbances generated by the heart and the conscience.

Others think that the supreme reason for believing in Christ with all one's mind is found in the heart's experience of Him, and that nothing else can serve as a substitute.

It seems to us that Christ's own teaching points in this direction. Was not the syllogism of Nicodemus very like the syllogism propounded by Professor Beet? 'Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these miracles which Thou doest [none could be raised from the dead like Thee] except God be with him.' That is not the whole of Christianity—of course not; but if Professor Beet is right, it is the one correct intellectual way of approaching Christian faith. We should have

expected, therefore, that Christ, accepting the position of a Divinely-sent teacher, would expound to Nicodemus the doctrines of His person and work. But He prefixes to these a demand for personal experience as the only possible initiation into Christian faith. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

Or let us think of Peter's great confession. What did the Master think of this? Was He pleased that Peter had reasoned soundly and justly upon the evidence submitted to Him? He says nothing of that; He speaks again of the inmost personal experiences. 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.' We are constrained, therefore, to persist in our own conception of apologetics. We cannot think that the true doctrine of Christ is to be reached by first apprehending Him as a Divinely-authorized teacher, and then summing up correctly what He says about Himself. We are persuaded that faith knows Christ, not by inference, but by beholding His glory, full of grace and truth. Not at second hand, but at first hand, we know our Lord and Master. He calls us; we follow Him.

In spite of the charge of subjectivity, therefore, and in spite of its dangers, we cling to the belief that incommunicable personal experience is the only 'firm foundation of the Christian faith.' Certainly, upon any view, correct intellectual processes, apart from loyalty to Christ, are not in the least degree near to the Christian *faith*, but hundreds of thousands of miles away from it. We give up the hope of handling these delicate and dangerous matters, these deep and awful things, in the cold dry light of science. We do not think that reason, assisted by miracle, is the proper herald and forerunner of faith. We despair of compelling any reluctant mind to believe in Christ. We cannot prove; we can only bear witness. But this im-

perfect—if you like, this *foolish*—method is, we are persuaded, God's chosen means of enlightening and warming human hearts and of achieving the world's redemption. As God's humble fellow-workers, we will follow this method, not wholly in vain.

### III

#### THE AIM OF THE MODERN APOLOGIST

IN studying the subject first of 'Custom and Reason' and then of 'Reason and Faith,' we have been leading up to the topic now before us. Faith is our one master-theme in this apologetic inquiry, and we wish to prepare ourselves for a short study of details by asking, What is the temper in which a Christian apologist ought to engage in discussion? What are the aims that he should set before himself? What is the attitude which it would be wise in him to take up, especially at the present day? How can he best serve his own generation according to the will of God?

In speaking of 'Reason and Faith,' we noted some changes that may be said to characterize all modern apologists, whether or not they agree with us in placing the apologetic centre of gravity just where we do. Even the more logical school—even those who are inclined to handle Christian apologetics, if possible, as a problem in pure science—even they do their utmost to simplify the discussion. While they appeal primarily and predominantly to miracle, they concentrate attention upon one miracle—our Lord's resurrection. While they wish to prove the authority of the whole letter of Scripture, they are content at first to prove the authority of Christ. They know that in this busy age, when life is practically shortened because leisure is so immensely curtailed, he who is to catch the ear of men

must speak tersely. They know that the great external force of the Christian tradition has been weakened. Men's intellectual prejudgments are no longer enlisted upon the side of Christian belief. One rash, needless, unproved assertion may damage the sacred cause we have to plead. Curtailment and rearrangement are therefore at work even with those who follow most closely the apologetic tradition of the past. And if we are bold enough to forsake that tradition, we shall doubtless make ourselves responsible for greater changes. We do well, therefore, to define our aims at the very start.

In another respect, too, such definition may seem to be called for, especially from us who put the moral proof higher than the miraculous, and who appeal first of all things to experience. What room, it may be asked, is left for the apologist? Can he do anything else than preach the Gospel? Must he not make way for the evangelist? Now, it seems to us perfectly true that the best of all apologetic work is done by a wise and faithful preaching of the Gospel. Let that be granted; let it be asserted and enforced. He who hears the voice of Christ finds certainty for his mind where he finds rest for his soul. The apologist, technically so called, occupies a lower place. Like so many others, he will do his best work when he is most conscious of his limitations. As John the Baptist was to Jesus, so is the man who deals with intellectual difficulties and with the intellectual approaches to faith as compared with the man who speaks straight to the conscience, and whom the common people hear gladly. Still, after all, there must needs be different ways of preaching the Gospel, or of breaking it down and applying it to life. We believe that the apologist's way is one of the ways of preaching, or, at least, of serving Christ; while others have to think of the temptations and difficulties of the home, the market-place,



the social hour, he has to think of the temptations of thought and lonely study. In this age, then, the apologist is certainly not less necessary than before as colleague or helper to the evangelist. And the God and Father of all men is the God of the student; He, who loves all, loves and cares for the doubter; Christ the Saviour of mankind is his Saviour.

1. As our first definition of the aim of the modern apologist, we may take a phrase which sums up the apologetic labours of the late Dr. A. B. Bruce, the prince of apologetic writers in our time. As he tells us again and again in one form of words after another, especially in his large volume on 'Apologetics,' the aim he set before himself was to succour distressed faith. The apologist has nothing to do with undisturbed faith; and, on this view of his functions, he has nothing to do with wilful unbelief. But there is a middle class, great or small—the class of those more or less fully sympathizing with the morals of Christianity, but intellectually troubled as to its grounds and proofs. These the apologist may help. His very existence may be a help to them. Sympathy may come as a surprise to their hearts. Honest doubt is a lonely thing, and every tempted soul (doubter or other) is inclined to think that no one else ever passed through this dark valley of the shadow. When Christian hears Hopeful singing amid the gloom he takes fresh heart. And in this spirit of sympathy explanations may be offered which will bring relief, and hard or unwelcome truths may be vindicated with some hope of success. Friend speaking to friend on these things, heart pleading with heart, God is never far off.

Only one thing, perhaps, should be added to Dr. Bruce's definition. As he states his case, it sounds as if he were binding apologetics to the service of one small class of mankind. But is it really so? Is there not in every heart

a distressed faith, begging for utterance, yearning for victory? Are we not all God's children, consciously or unconsciously in need of Him? Though our heavenly sympathies may be almost choked—or utterly choked—yet the dead may live again and the lost be found. So says the evangelist; but the apologist, too, in his own way, offers the message of God's love to every heart when he seeks to deliver faith from overwhelming distresses.

2. A second formulation of the problem by Dr. Bruce is perhaps less fortunate. He tells us that the apologist's creed should be made as short as possible. The aim is good. It is well to put little burden upon the weak, and we may wisely begin with minimum demands. But must we not advance further? Are we not servants of the truth? And does not God know best? It may be that comfort or help or warning will find its way to the heart by-and-by from those very portions of our creed which we are tempted to leave out for the sake of simplicity. If we are uncertain, let us frankly say so; but if we are certain, let us frankly say so too, and give our reasons. We are all children of light and children of the day. Truth is our prize; the whole truth is our inheritance and heirloom from Jesus Christ, who is Himself the truth.

3. Quite a different attitude in apologetics is suggested by the ideal of silencing the scoffer. A great deal of apologetic work in the past has had this motive. Bludyer has had a great career as an evidential writer, no less than as a literary critic. The slashing article has expanded into a slashing volume—dear and welcome to the 'Hard Church.' An immensely able man of a past generation, Henry Rogers, perhaps rather unfairly represented by Hutton's pungent phrase, worked in this vein. So did Dean Mansel; and out of Mansel's apologetics bourgeoned and bloomed Mr. Herbert Spencer's Agnosticism.

Now, there is no reason why some apologetic work should not be done in this spirit. If there are honest doubters who deserve all sympathy and help, there are also dishonest, or shallow, or noisy talkers who have richly earned a setting down. You may even alternate. One day, or upon one page, you may be rescuing a strayed and torn lamb, carrying it home, binding up its wounds; the next, you may be wolf-hunting, and cheering on the dogs against your quarry. It will be difficult, however, to do both forms of service efficiently. And the process of setting down an enemy is apt to become a rivalry, not in logic, but in wit. If you are cleverer than your antagonist, you make him look foolish, whether you are in the right or whether he is. If he is cleverer than you, he makes you look foolish before all men—you and your Master. 'All that take the sword perish with the sword.' Force yields to force; what cleverness gains, cleverness on the other side can regain or reconquer. The victories of truth, of love, of Christ—they seem slowly attained; we count them few in number; but they stand eternally.

It is quite possible that it may be our duty to silence (if we can) some mischievous prater. Only let us make sure that this is our Divine calling, not our wilful choice, and then let us do our best. But let us beware of a too complete logical victory. No commander can afford to despise the enemy's troops. When we seem to have crushed down all opposition, we may be pretty sure there is a loophole which vitiates our achievement. It is not thus, generally, that the truth of Christ prevails. Often it is when we do badly, when we ourselves are crushed, when the laugh goes against us—then it is that our witness-bearing is accepted by God, and that some honest heart among our antagonists, looking for truth, perceives in us and in our witness-bearing that which it cannot put aside. Christianity is moral and super-

natural from first to last, and the apologist constitutes no exception to that great law of the kingdom of God, 'When I am weak, then am I strong.'

4. Quite a different conception from all these of an apologist's duty is that which would lead him to labour for abstract truth in the spirit of a man of science. Those who appeal predominantly to the argument from miracles may claim this advantage; and in a sense the advantage is considerable; but probably it is dearly bought. We at least will not seek it. If we believe in succouring distressed faith—if we even believe in silencing wicked scoffers—we must forego the claim to a disinterestedness like that of science. We feel in every fibre of our being the great interests of faith committed to us, and our responsibility in serving them.

By what measures in detail can the apologist carry out the aim to which we have given predominance—the aim of helping those who wish, if they can, to believe?

1. First, we must unload part of our cargo. We must disburden ourselves of some inherited beliefs which are false, and whose tendency is to compromise or endanger the Christian position. This is the first task of the apologist. In some respects it is the easiest of his duties, and in some respects the most dangerous. One may induce men to accept one's negations, and then may fail to commend to them one's affirmations. They may follow one in evacuating untenable positions, but may go on to surrender the key of the whole situation. They may part with vital truth as well as with accidental error. It is right to recognise this danger, but its presence cannot annul our duty. Up to this very hour, the stock-in-trade of the fighting secularists of England and America is largely made up of Old Testament difficulties which, from the point of view of modern apologetics, and

in great measure from the point of view of modern criticism, are no difficulties at all. The educated apologist must help his less educated neighbours to recognise what should be defended still, and what is indefensible. If withdrawals are made in the right spirit, they may even serve for the direct furtherance and strengthening of faith. The Church is to become less, even the Bible is to become less, that Christ may become more. In all our movements of thought we may feel His presence, and consciously obey His word of command.

2. Next, we must graduate our beliefs. We must be done with the old assumption that the whole of theology is equally certain and equally important. That is not the case. Some of our affirmations are more vital than others, and some of our positions are more certain than others; generally, if not always, the two scales will coincide. We have to distinguish between the central beliefs of our hearts and mere hypotheses in aid of faith, or forms in which we state the faith and work out its results intellectually. No clear line of demarcation can be drawn; but we must remember that it is only our limitations that prevent us from doing so. The apologist must learn to say, 'I don't know'; he must also say, 'Perhaps' and 'I think so'; also he may say, 'It is possible, but improbable'; 'It is highly improbable'; 'No.' At other times, and with quite a different emphasis, he must say 'Yes'; and when he says it, you must know that he means it with all his heart. This constitutes one of the broad differences between the evangelist and the apologist. The evangelist deals only with God's everlasting yea. He dwells with the central truths; if he is wise, he refuses ever to leave them. The apologist on the contrary, has all knowledge for his province—all knowledge that is religious or Christian. His love turns to the centre of things too; but he shows his love for Christ by discussing

everything, certain or uncertain, probable or improbable, with Christian frankness, and in the light of Christian faith. Vast as his canvas is, he so disposes the light and shade in his picture that the eye may be led on to the one dominant Figure. For him, too, Christ is All in all.

3. This is our last and our chief recommendation. Let the apologist press steadily to the centre. Others may handle Christian evidence as an exercise in logic ; we handle it with reverence as our allotted task of witness-bearing for Christ. Everything we say or leave unsaid has this motive. Our one desire is that those to whom we speak should hear our Lord's voice ; He is *both theirs and ours*. It was shrewdly said in 'Essays and Reviews' that English apologists last century were so busy with the proofs of Christianity that they almost forgot its contents. It was shrewdly said. Please God, there shall never be just ground for saying it again.

We have all heard the story of Cato the elder in the Roman Senate. Whatever subject was under debate, he, in accordance with the privileges of a senator, introduced his own subject, and made the same speech. *Delenda est Carthago*—Carthage must be destroyed ! He said it again and again, till at last his advice was taken, and the old fierce rival of Rome was razed to the dust. Let us follow this example. Let us likewise be one-idea'd, and tirelessly persistent. At all times, and in connection with all subjects, let us repeat our message : Jesus Christ is to be trusted ; Christ is to be served ; Christ is to be believed ; Christ is to be loved. Let us repeat this till we—till our God—drives it home.

Our next subject, accordingly, will be Christ Himself, His personality and sinlessness. In the light of Christ we shall then try to say something regarding what are known as

the problems of natural theology—the being of God, and the like—problems which have often been treated as logically antecedent to Christian faith. Thereafter we shall deal with the accessory proofs of Christianity—miracles, prophecy, history—glance at Old Testament difficulties, and end with experience, thus striking once more our keynote. For we find the reason for faith essentially here, in the personal contact of the human spirit with Jesus the Son of God.

#### IV

### THE SINLESSNESS OF JESUS

It needs but little familiarity with modern apologetic literature to observe how much more use is being made than formerly of the character and personality of Jesus. The 'return to Christ' is a fact in apologetics, whatever we may think of its value for Christian doctrine. Apologetically, we start from the impression made upon us by Christ's personality, and we find the kernel of the subject in Christ's sinlessness. While we are asking what is proved, or what is made probable, the *sinlessness* of Jesus is the significant centre of our thoughts. The preacher, on the other hand, says little about it; he deals more directly with Christ as example, as Lord, as Saviour.

Accordingly, we note here a characteristic instance of the divergence in method—compatible with the fullest unity in spirit—between apologetics and evangelism.

I. We must first deal with some objections to the doctrines of Christ's sinlessness.

1. It is said that sinlessness is a merely negative conception. We must grant this. The word at least is negative. And we admit the truth of what is implied, that Christ's conception of goodness is in the highest degree positive. He required His disciples to be salt, to be light. The talent hid in a napkin was a proof to Him of sloth and wickedness; the worst of all offences was that goodness which merely does no harm—'the unlit lamp and the



ungirt loin.' He Himself filled His short earthly ministry with the most active and untiring service of God and man. When we say 'sinlessness,' we do not mean merely the negative absence of evil; we mean positive faithfulness to the will of God and to the vocation of Sonship (Heb. iii. 2, 4). And yet there is something significant even in our use of a negative term. It points to the impression made by Christ's unearthly purity. He stands alone in that.

2. Another objection tells us that Christ once repudiated sinlessness (Mark x. 18, and parallels). It is clear that Christ repudiated the epithet 'good' as it was offered Him, and insisted that goodness properly belongs to God alone. Some Christian interpreters think that our Lord spoke thus because His vocation was only half accomplished. While His human character was still growing He would not be called 'good' like Him who is eternal and essential goodness. That may be; but the simple impression always recurs to one's mind that Christ was offended by a patronizing compliment from an unripe nature which did not know what goodness was. In the first Gospel many manuscripts give a different reading, which might possibly afford some help. On the whole, we must grant that the saying is difficult and obscure, but it is certainly no admission of sin. Are God's holy angels sinful?

3. The really telling objection in men's minds is disbelief in the possibility of a sinless man. They appeal to the universality of sin. That is a Bible truth. Nowhere else is it so deeply felt or so plainly inculcated. If, in spite of this, the Bible gives us not merely the assertion but the living image of a sinless character, are we to refuse its testimony unheard because of dogmatic prejudgments or life-long habits and experiences? God keep us from such folly!

II. We proceed to the proofs of Christ's sinlessness.

1. Observation from the outside cannot fully prove sinlessness, yet we may well attach importance to the witness borne by Christ's disciples, some of whom had lived with Him by day and night, and all of whom had learned the lessons of His new and tremendous moral requirement. He gave new ideals to their thought, new delicacy to their perception; and this is what they report of Him with one voice: He Himself was sinless. He 'did no sin,' says St. Peter, 'neither was guile found in His mouth' (1 Pet. ii. 22). God, says St. Paul, 'made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin' (2 Cor. v. 21). 'Ye know,' says St. John, 'that He was manifested to take away [our] sins; and in Him is no sin' (1 John iii. 5). He 'was in all points tempted like as we are,' says the Epistle to the Hebrews (iv. 15), 'yet without sin.' And again, in the same epistle, Christ is described in glowing words as 'a high priest such as became us—holy, harmless, undefiled,' and now 'separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens' (Heb. vii. 26). Again, the Apostolic age has favourite *names* for Christ which bear the same witness to Him. 'Ye denied,' says Peter, preaching at Jerusalem—'ye denied the Holy and Righteous One' (Acts iii. 14). So, too, Stephen: 'Your fathers killed them which showed before the coming of the Righteous One, of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers' (Acts vii. 52; compare also xxii. 14). It is at least a possible interpretation that refers to the death of Christ what is said in St. James' denunciation of rich men: 'Ye have condemned, ye have killed the Righteous One; He doth not resist you' (Jas. v. 6). And John says in his epistle: 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous' (1 John ii. 1).

2. This chorus of testimony is strengthened by a deeper voice when our Lord Himself is found uttering a claim to

sinlessness. He spoke what He knew ; He knew Himself, and man and God. It is in the fourth Gospel that we meet with these utterances : John viii. 46, 'Which of you convicteth Me of sin ?' ; viii. 29, 'I do always the things that please the Father' ; xv. 10, 'I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love'—but here the like blessedness is offered on similar terms to disciples—'if ye keep My commandments ye shall abide in My love' ; xvii. 4, 'I have glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou gavest Me to do' ; and finally, xix. 30, 'It is finished.'

3. We must not think, however, that the main stress of our argument rests even upon these sayings. Christ loved to be discovered. He did not teach dogmatically, but suggestively. He showed Himself to His disciples and questioned them. 'Who say ye that I am ?' Not flesh and blood could teach them, not even God Incarnate by any outward method ; only the Father in heaven. Accordingly Christ showed or implied His sinlessness very much more than He asserted it.

(a) With all His keen consciousness of sin, with all His burning zeal for the glory of God, with all His loving and loyal brotherhood towards the lowest of men, He never once confessed personal sin.

He taught His disciples to pray for pardon. It is one of the few petitions He included in His model for daily use. He was their Example as well as their Teacher. According to Luke (xi. 1) it was His example as a Man of prayer which made them ask to be taught how to pray. And yet He never sets them the example of confessing sin. When He dwells on the necessity of forgiving our own enemies if we would have God forgive us, He is careful not to group Himself with us, as if He had been in any need of personal forgiveness. He does not say, as any other man would

have said: 'If we forgive men their trespasses. . . .' He says, *If ye* (Matt. vi. 14). He came to set us an example; He is the great forgiver and reconciler of enemies. Why is He not our example in craving God's forgiveness except because He needed it not, but *abode in God's love*? And when, again, with all kindness and tenderness, He spoke of human sin, He did not include Himself in the guilty race. Matt. vii. 11: 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children . . .'; not, *If we*.

(b) Nor did Jesus disregard sin. He was not inattentive to it. Bad men have been so, like Voltaire, whose brilliant talents and generous courage cannot make us forget his profanity and his love of filth. Voltaire, according to so unprejudiced a judge as Mr. John Morley, has nothing to tell us about the great 'disturbance in human nature which the Churches call sin.' Good men, too—which is stranger—have been thus colour-blind to the sin of man. Emerson, with his pure-souled but rather thin and shadowy idealism, is a good example of this class.\* But Jesus was a specialist in sin. He came as the fulfilment of the Old Testament, which is full of the dreadful subject, and He Himself knew more than even the Old Testament could teach. Sin terrifies Him. 'If thy right hand causes thee to sin, cut it off' (Matt. v. 30; and elsewhere). We are so habituated to sin that it is hard for us to learn the lesson of His purity, but learn it we must. Again (Matt. xv. 19; Mark vii. 21) He gives a woeful catalogue of the things which come 'from within, out of the heart.' Had He a heart like that, by nature, till He cleansed it? And yet He never offers one prayer for pardon! Not so; not so. He knew sin in

\* Carlyle is said to have shown Emerson some of the slums of London, asking him: 'Do you believe in hell now?' Emerson is said to have replied that the more he saw of mankind the more he felt man's essential greatness and dignity.

all its hatefulness just because He Himself was pure. His Apostles weep for their sins—Peter, for his denial of Christ ; Paul, for his action in persecuting the Church. Jesus weeps, only for us. We are His grief, because He knows our sin ; and there is a joy set before Him, better than the glory that He had before the world was, in saving us from sin and restoring us to God.

(c) The final proof of Christ's sinlessness is His forgiving sins, and that authoritatively (Matt. ix. 2-6, and parallels ; also Luke vii. 48). Seldom did Christ speak such words. But He forgave sin not merely by uttered sayings. The great action of His death forgives us, in memory of which He founded the Sacrament of the Supper with its cup of the 'covenant'—that 'new covenant' (Jer. xxxi. 31) established on the *forgiveness of sins*—'Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.'

He who dies as a sacrifice is sinless and something beyond. Has not Christ, then, shown us what He is ? Has He not revealed His sinlessness in the most moving and the most convincing way ?

III. Faith in Christ is a deeper and more living thing than correct opinion either as to His sinlessness, or His Divinity, or His atonement. Faith in Christ is the knowledge of Christ in personal friendship ; it is full submission and absolute trust. Yet we must note the inferences which the true doctrine of Christ's sinlessness offers to our thought.

1. It proves to us that sin is not an essential part of human nature. Not by natural law or natural necessity do we sin. It is an evil delusion to suppose that natural law—which means physical law—rules in the region of human will. And there is no kind of necessity binding the doom of sin upon humanity as such. Christ is true man—the truer because of His purity ; and Christ is sinless.

Practically, we shall not firmly believe in the non-necessity of sin except we believe also in Christ, the sinless One, the Saviour.

2. The sinlessness of Jesus, once admitted, helps us to believe in many other miracles. Strictly and formally, it is itself perhaps not a miracle. If sin is not due to natural law, sinlessness cannot imply the suspension of natural law. If sin does not arise by necessity, then, in the abstract, the appearance of a sinless human being is possible by what is called a 'sport' of *Nature*. But no one will think thus of Jesus as a mere accident. He tells us, and it is plainly true, that God sent Him. His sinlessness thus becomes one of the first and greatest verifications of a higher or supernatural order, blending with the natural course of human history in order to transform and redeem it. Physical miracles are the natural accompaniment to the sinless Person; and they in their turn are further verifications.

3. Sinlessness groups Christ along with God in contrast to all other good men. It thus safeguards His uniqueness. The older Evangelicalism isolated Jesus from His fellows. 'Give us the Gospel,' Christians used to say, 'not education, not teetotalism, not social reform; just the old Gospel, the one power of God unto salvation.' The newer Evangelicalism acts differently. For it the Christian salvation is not an isolated summit like the Scottish Ben Lomond, but rather resembles Helvellyn, 'rising above its fellows.\*' For this we thank God. He is teaching us to use every method for doing good, and to use all in Christ's name. But we run more risk than our fathers did of coming to merge Christ in the mass of ordinary good influences. The doctrine of His sinlessness already protects us against that danger.

\* See Miss Dorothy Wordsworth's 'Journal of a Tour in Scotland.'

4. It also leads up to a fuller protection. It points us to Christ's true Godhead. If He is not an artificially constituted man, and is not a mere historical accident, He must be God. For, if He comes from God, and yet is not Himself Divine, then God saved the world merely by a miracle of power, when He constituted the sinless personality of Jesus—God did no more than that—Jesus suffered; Jesus paid the price; our gratitude is due to Jesus, and not to God. But, if the Son of God came into the world to save sinners, if God spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, we are redeemed by a miracle not of power but of love; and the Father is glorified in the Son.

5. Finally, the doctrine of sinlessness points us to the perfectness of Christ as a Saviour. It is not in negative goodness that He is complete, but in the accomplishment of the supreme task, the world's redemption. The awful sacrifice has been paid, and He is *able to save to the uttermost*. Thus the central apologetic theme returns at the end to the central Gospel theme, telling us of God's unspeakable Gift.

## THE PROBLEMS OF NATURAL THEOLOGY

WHILE Christian faith is, first and foremost, faith in Jesus Christ, that faith seems logically to presuppose something prior to itself. Christ is a messenger from God; natural theology undertakes to tell us how, in the light of Nature or reason, and independently of supernatural revelation, we can be sure of the existence of that God in whose name Christ spoke. This subject is less interesting than the more directly Christian portions of apologetics. It is also more difficult, since it runs at every point into questions of philosophy. Not that natural theology implies one set of philosophical opinions to the exclusion of all others. We must not dream of erecting a standard of philosophical orthodoxy, or of summoning Christians everywhere to conform to such a standard. On the contrary, there have been, and there are, different types of natural theology corresponding to different philosophical schools. Still, in that very way natural theology gets entangled with philosophical controversies, and the entanglement will make many minds shrink from the study of Theism.

Natural theology may also be disliked because of its connection with Deism. The eighteenth-century Deists were champions of natural theology, and of what was called natural religion as well. Further, they contended that natural religion was the whole of what we needed—that revelation was a superfluity. It is not strange if Christians



should recoil even from natural theology, and throw themselves simply and solely upon faith in Christ. *Here* is the knowledge of God—here, indeed! At the same time, a thoroughgoing denial of natural theology has usually proved a help to religious scepticism rather than to the assertion of revelation.\*

I. For a statement of natural theology in its pride, we must turn to a half-forgotten German writer, Wolff. It is interesting to remember that Wolff wrote in Latin, though he sometimes dared to write on philosophy in the German language; while the more distinguished man whose philosophy he popularized and simplified, Leibniz, alternated between Latin and French. Wolff was not a Deist, but he belonged to the parallel movement in German Protestantism generally described as 'The Illumination.' If we say that he and his friends were the prophets or heralds of an age of enlightenment, we shall understand their attitude and significance. Its most notable and offensive formulation is Tom Paine's 'Age of Reason.' Wolff, I need not say, was far from being a Tom Paine in his attitude. He offers us a hard, dry, logical, somewhat shallow Theism. There are three great objects of knowledge, culminating in natural theology. Ontology or metaphysics is the basis of all; each of the others must be treated on principles of reason. Thus we get Rational Psychology, Rational Cosmology, and Rational Theology. For Wolff, in his dry way, talks like all the saints and prophets,

'Of God, of the world, of the soul.'

The soul is the subject of rational psychology. Is there a soul? Has it a substance of its own? Does its substance

\* Natural theology and natural religion were renounced by Schleiermacher. A denial *in toto* of natural theology is one of the features of the much canvassed school of Ritschl at the present day.

guarantee its immortality? Reason—cold, dry reason—is supposed to answer ‘Yes’ to all these questions. In rational cosmology, as treated by Wolff, we do not get a religious or Theistic doctrine of the world unless in relation to the problem of creation. But other questions—providence in the two forms of preservation and government; God’s foreknowledge and man’s freedom; the possibility, and perhaps the mechanism, of answers to prayer—these problems, and such as these, might belong to a ‘rational’ doctrine of the world *in its relation to God*. Wolff’s outlines of his three rational ‘sciences’ remain, like flies in amber, embedded in Kant’s tremendous criticism of them in his ‘Critique of Pure Reason’—a book which stands like a boundary-mark separating an old world of thought and belief from a new world.

II. For the most part (as with Wolff himself), natural theology concentrates its attention upon the master problem—the subject of Wolff’s third science—and deals not with the soul or with the world, but only with God. It is certainly true that our doctrine of God rules all our other doctrines; but yet we ought to remember that we cannot assert or vindicate Christian Theism without asserting corresponding doctrines regarding the world and man.

In another way, too, natural theology simplifies its task. It seeks merely for *proofs*—*i.e.*, for proofs *that God is*, saying little or nothing on the question *what* God is. As if we all had the true conception of God ready-made in our minds, and only needed to be convinced that God was an objective reality, not a figment of the brain! But there are many thoughts or doctrines concerning God. *What He is* should engage our attention at least as much as the bare assertion *that He is*.

There are three great *proofs* collected from previous thinkers by Leibniz and Wolff and criticised by Kant.

With these every educated man ought to have some acquaintance.

1. First, we may name the cosmological argument, the argument concluding from many effects to one original source or fountain. By this argument God is conceived and described as the 'Great First Cause.' The argument is characteristic of intuitionist philosophy, a school of philosophy which may be termed the 'old guard' of orthodoxy. If all effects have causes—if we know this *by a sort of mental instinct*, independently of experience, and beyond doubt or challenge—then we may be certain of the existence of God, or at least of the existence of one Great First Cause.\* Kant objects to this argument that if causation is a *universal* truth, there can be no First Cause. Like the child or the savage, when told that God made all things, we must ask, Who made God? Perhaps it is enough to reply that first *cause* is a philosophically inaccurate description, but that we are bound to conceive of *One Great Power* behind phenomena. Science, indeed, more and more plainly affirms the ultimate unity of the Cosmos. It is a more difficult question whether our arguments have as yet entitled us to call this one mysterious, all-encompassing force by the great name of God. Yet even here we must recall an observation of John Locke's: that we are bound to infer *mind* in the Great Cause from *mind* in its effects—*i.e.*, from mind in ourselves.

This common-sense Theism, however roughly defined, has elements of truth in it. No sophistry will prevail on us to throw it away. It is held that the great Greek philosopher Aristotle, in his doctrine of a first cause of motion outside the universe, stated a cosmological proof for the being of God.

2. Next, we may name the teleological or physico-

\* This was the argument chiefly relied on by Wolff.

theological proof—to give it a simpler name, the design argument. The cant phrase for this is that ‘design implies a designer’; if we prefer less question-begging language, we may say that *adaptation* implies a designer. This argument is available for empiricist philosophers—for those who believe that all our knowledge is gained from experience, or is put into the mind from without. Usually philosophy of that type has tended towards religious scepticism. It is particularly hard to defend our moral ideas upon these lines. Right and wrong are surely something more than generalizations from experience. Still, we have a sturdy English thinker like Paley holding to empiricism; and he builds up his *Natural Theology* upon the design argument. Without saying anything about intuitive principles of the mind, or about a Great First Cause, one may notice in the world round about one (and particularly in living creatures) adjustments and adaptations of parts to parts such as could only have been made by a creative *mind*. That is the argument: there must be a Great Designer. Empiricists may use the argument alone; intuitionists add it to their plea for a Great First Cause. A still earlier thinker than Aristotle, Socrates, stated the design argument.

Kant objected to this argument that it seemed to point to a *limited* being—one who did not make matter, but impressed his purposes upon given materials. It is usual to cut the knot by saying that the God of order, the Source of design, the Author of adaptations, may be regarded as *also* the Creator of the matter upon which He works.

Quite a different objection has had great effect in recent times. The design argument had been very much associated with belief in special creation. God, it had been thought, framed by a series of interventions each living species ‘after its kind.’ Then Darwinism arose, and made the belief probable, if not certain, that different species of

living creatures have arisen from one parent-stock by natural law, not by creative intervention. At first it seemed as if Darwin had abolished the very idea of teleology. But that was too hasty a conclusion. It may even be maintained that the old argument holds good—that, however species arose, they imply the working (direct or indirect) of Divine wisdom. Perhaps, however, it is better to state the argument differently. If evolution is a fact, we may expect to see the *purpose* of the whole process revealed in its highest stages. Evolution means teleology—

‘ One far-off Divine event,  
To which the whole creation moves.’

The moral discipline of mankind is pointed to as the purpose (so far as we can grasp it) of the whole course of Nature. Nature, fulfilling one moral plan, points back to God as the Fountain and Source of that plan and purpose.

3. The third great argument is the ontological or *a priori* argument. It runs as follows: The very thought of God implies that He exists; the very thought of a most real or most perfect Being includes the perfection of existence (Anselm), or implies self-existence (Descartes). This argument will always sound to common-sense like a paradox or a verbal quibble. It is the soul of idealist philosophy, however. It gives us idealism like Hegel's in a nutshell, though scholastic in form of statement. Thought is before all things, and by thought all things consist; and thought alone, yet of necessity, makes us certain of God. Once again, however, we may hesitate to decide whether the Absolute Being of idealist philosophy quite deserves to be called God.

Even if we are not idealists, we find ourselves yielding to necessities of thought when we style God *omnipotent*, *omniscient*, etc. Facts may prove that God is strong and wise;

only a bold leap of thought or of faith can assert His absolute power or His all-wisdom.

4. A fourth argument is often added to the classic three, largely through the influence of Kant—the *moral* argument. As held by intuitionists, it is a further supplement to the argument from effect to cause. Thus, Martineau has two main divisions in his Theistic argument—God as cause, and God as perfection. The cant phrase for this argument, in more popular versions of natural theology, is that [moral] law implies a lawgiver.

The argument from evolution which we have hinted at as the highest form of the design argument is really a moral argument in favour of Theism.\*

III. Kant, however, offered his moral argument as a *substitute* for all the old proofs—he rejected these. He held that the theoretical reason could not be sure of God, but that God was a postulate of man's practical reason. He recognised three such postulates (it is curious how the number three starts up to meet us, unsought and unexpected)—God, freedom of the will, immortality. Unfortunately, Kant's moral certainties were locked in a deadly embrace with speculative doubts; and he admitted no help from revelation. In one aspect, he was the abolishment of the old Deism and rationalistic enlightenment; in another aspect, his 'Religion within the Bounds of Pure Reason' offered Deism a new lease of life. Still, he shows the possibility of basing one type of Theism even upon philosophical Agnosticism, if such Agnosticism does not pass all limits.

IV. In conclusion, we may indicate in a few words a provisional opinion regarding the problems of Theism.

The old Theistic proofs have their value. Yet it is

\* A subordinate argument might be based on beauty. The beauty of nature disproves materialism and points towards God.

doubtful how far, apart from revelation, reason can make us sure of a personal God; and it is certain that only revelation can do what is of vital importance for us—introduce us to God's friendship. Moreover, Kant seems to strike the right note at least in this respect, when he tells us that we are vitally concerned to be certain of God, of immortality, and of free will.

1. The Christian knowledge of God (whatever previous elements it may take up into itself) is the knowledge of God in Christ as our Friend and our Saviour. Where do we see God acting a Father's part? Where does He distinctly manifest Himself as a Person, personally interested in the welfare of beings who seem so often the sport of Nature's laws? How can we obtain permanent, lasting assurance of His favour? There is only one answer.

2. The Christian doctrine of immortality is similarly Christocentric. Not any 'vaticinations of nature' or 'vaticinations of conscience' constitute it, though they may enter into it; but simply and sovereignly this Gospel fact—*Christ is risen*. More fully, the Gospel is this: *Christ who died for our sins is risen*. And if a missing link should be further supplied, we have it in the thought that *neither death nor life shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ*.

All other truth regarding immortality is a great way subordinate to this.

3. Analogy suggests that only in the fellowship of Jesus Christ is free will also matter of certain experience. Much apologetic labour in connection with free will is devoted to showing that freedom is *not impossible* in the light of scientific belief regarding natural law. We need to do such work; but it is doubtful whether we ought to try to demonstrate freedom in the proper sense as an attribute of unredeemed humanity.

It is even doubtful whether *duty* is fully revealed, save in the school of Christ. Something is revealed ; what all men know regarding duty is pre-eminently a stepping-stone and introduction to higher things. But Christ is the true light ; and Christ must lighten every man.



## VI

### THE GOSPEL MIRACLES OF HEALING

THE older school of Apologists made everything turn upon the question of miracle, and, in dealing with miracle, concentrated attention for argument's sake upon the one supremely important event, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The modern school of Apologists bestows its chief attention not on the seals or tokens accompanying revelation, but on the substance of revelation itself. The sinless character of Jesus Christ, the character of God manifested in Him, the nature of religious experience in those who trust Him—all these are different names for one thing, and that thing is to us not only the matter requiring to be proved but its own best credential, shining in its own light. Among secondary confirmations, however, we are bound to give a foremost place to miracle. Miracles are alleged to have happened in connection with the work of Christ; if they are real facts, they are tremendously impressive and significant facts.

We prefer, however, to approach them in a different order from that favoured by older Apologists. While the resurrection of our Lord is the cardinal miracle of the Christian faith, it is not (as a physical event) the miracle which has the greatest mass of evidence behind it. That position belongs rather to Christ's miracles of healing. They stand out in bold relief on the page of history, compelling the attention and challenging the belief of all honourable students. If we convince ourselves that they

were indeed miracles wrought by God, we pass on with strengthened faith to inquire what is true regarding the appearances of the risen Lord, and the supreme miracle of His resurrection. For here, exceptionally, the order of importance does not coincide with the order of clearness or demonstrativeness. The clearest case for miracle is in connection with the works of healing. The most vital instance of miracle is not the ministry of healing, but Christ's resurrection. Its evidence is ample, though Christian evidence never is and never can be demonstrative. Its evidence, we say again, is ample; yet we do well to approach it by the way of those miracles for which the evidence is almost overwhelming.

One other preliminary word. In asserting the miracles of healing, we do not necessarily imply that all the Bible miracles, or even that all the Gospel healings, must have been objective miraculous facts, as the narratives represent them to us. We do imply that when every reasonable deduction has been made, the honest and good heart still finds a solid miracle nucleus fair in view.

I. There are two great *objections* to miracles which are historically important. One class of objectors, headed by Spinoza, declare that miracles are impossible; another class, headed by Hume, declare that miracles are incredible. Anything is more credible, say the second group of objectors, than that a miracle should really have happened. The antecedent improbability of miracles is so great as to overbear the very best possible evidence. Delusion or fraud is always likelier than miraculous intervention.

Evidently those who take this line might almost as well say frankly that they regard a miracle as impossible. The distinction between the two positions is really very shadowy indeed; though it sounds less dogmatic and less pretentious

to say 'incredible' than to say 'impossible,' there is no warrant for the first except proof of the second. The late Matthew Arnold, a more modern critic of miracles, glides easily from one attitude into the other. Sometimes he tells us that we disbelieve in miracles because we know too well how belief in miracle arises. That is a serious objection. Too many supernatural stories are afloat which will not bear investigation. The supernatural in the revelation of Jesus Christ is one thing, the supernatural of 'Mr. Sludge the Medium' is quite another. The Christian advocate is not in the least anxious that people should be easily credulous of alleged miracles. On the contrary, he regards a Divine miracle as a very serious and wonderful matter indeed, for which he is bound to produce strong and grave proofs before he asks men's belief. But presently Arnold slides into the other vein. 'Miracles,' he says in one of his catching phrases—'miracles *do not happen*,' and there we have full-blown dogmatism, independent of anything so humble as a study of evidence.

Serious men will not allow themselves to be talked out of belief in miracles by *a priori* prejudices. The question can only be settled by going carefully into the evidence for alleged miracles. It is useless to say in abstract general terms that fraud or delusion must be more credible than miracle. Is fraud or delusion more probable *in the records of the life of Christ* than a Divine miracle? That is the crucial question.

Yet a third objection is brought against miracles as a Christian evidence by certain devout but not orthodox Germans. Nearly the same position is held in our own country by Dr. E. A. Abbott—a man whom one might dare to describe as combining the powerful advocacy of great truths with very serious errors. According to this view, we want no miraculous evidences; we want faith in

the character of Jesus Christ. Miracles, whether they happened or not, cannot produce Christian faith ; they can only infect it and alloy it.

We for our part agree largely with what is here affirmed. Miracle does not suffice to generate saving faith. Miracle is not the highest proof. 'Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me ; or else believe Me for the very works' sake.' The New Testament long ago took up that tale ; we may have forgotten it, but it stands before our eyes. Yet the New Testament also teaches that the lower evidence was added to the higher. Christ had a short span of human life on earth. He gave up great part of His time and of His strength to miracles of healing. Shall we ignore that fact ? Is it conceivable that it should have no lesson for us ? Christ's gifts of healing produced a wave of wild excitement. He must have known that they would do so ; He feared the associated danger—'see thou tell no man.' Yet on a balance Christ Jesus, who never refused to accept incidental losses for the sake of greater gains, thought these deeds worth the doing. He filled His ministry with them. Are we really to ignore them ?

II. Here the new objection has to be faced : Perhaps the cures were not strictly miraculous. They might be signs of the Divine mission of Christ, though they were the natural working of certain powers belonging to His physical constitution. Arnold supposes that the modern world might approach much nearer the powers of Jesus if it gave more study to 'moral therapeutics.' Dr. Abbott thinks that the Gospel cures were particularly successful 'faith-healings.' It is argued that most of the miracles are expulsions of demons, but demons (so it is argued) do not exist. If, therefore, what objectively took place was misconstrued when it was interpreted as the driving away of a demon,

may it not also have been misconstrued when interpreted as—strictly and literally—a miracle?

Now this, again, is a respectable objection. The Bible facts come to us claiming our belief and support; but they leave us largely to frame our own theory or philosophy of them. It is conceivable that God, working through natural causes, brought it to pass that the ministry of the Saviour should be accompanied by significant gifts of bodily healing. We believe, however, that the detailed evidence is fatal to this view. Again and again the best attested healings pass unmistakably across the line of the supernatural.

(a) For one thing, our Lord worked cures at a distance, and He seems to have done this first of all on the suggestion of a Gentile centurion (Matt. viii. 8). Here moral therapeutics and mesmeric powers are wholly out of the question; yet the cures go on. One condition remains in force—faith; faith exercised, if not by the patient, yet by others on his behalf. Jesus exacts moral conditions, and studies the moral fitness of things in every wonder. What happens in healing at a distance is credible *as a miracle*; and as a miracle it is wise, Christ-like, Christ-worthy. It stands as an encouragement to intercessory prayer. In God's moral government, in God's kind providence, one man's faith may help to heal another.

(b) Again, Jesus cleanses lepers; but it will hardly be claimed that hypnotism or moral therapeutics could avail so far as that! What, then, is the counterposition here of those who deny miracle? They say that Jesus gave a certificate of cleanness to men who were already healed, in order to save them the trouble of visiting the priests at Jerusalem. It matters nothing to 'our friends the enemy' that this is precisely what Jesus refused to do! 'Anything is more credible than that a miracle really happened.' *Is it?* When Jesus told the disciples of John to report that

'the lepers were cleansed,' was He boasting of that ludicrously cheap triumph? The counterposition here is not a respectable belief, but a discreditable evasion.

(c) Jesus also raises the dead—not often or habitually, which could not be, but in three marked and celebrated instances. (Compare also Matt. xi. 5.) The clearest evidence (embedded in the Triple Tradition) belongs to the case of Jairus' daughter. Here the objector has his counter-position plainly marked out for him. It was trance, not death; Jesus Himself said so. He does not use the word which the New Testament assigns to the death-sleep of God's friends when He says, 'She sleepeth.' The event, however, was misunderstood, and the other stories grew up to match it. All these plausibilities can readily be met and answered. Jesus said 'sleep,' not 'death,' before seeing the patient. He had no occasion to use the word which marks the Christian's death-sleep when He meant to promise (in a parable) speedy restoration in place of the long, sad separation caused by man's last enemy. He worked in mystery, 'putting them all out'; most necessarily if He was about (this once, when death had come while He was delayed on the way to the sick-bed) to raise the dead, but most unlike Christ if only a trance needed His help. He must have known that if He shrouded His work in mystery, many would say that He had raised the girl from death.

The character of Christ accordingly makes it certain that here He was actually restoring one who had been dead. And, if here, elsewhere also the same thing is credible, though of necessity it could occur but rarely. Now this is miracle indeed, supernatural of the supernatural. Death cannot be touched by 'moral therapeutics.'

We may also note Christ's defences of His works. On one occasion, according to St. Luke's report, He uses

language which is almost technically an assertion of the supernatural (xi. 20 ; *cf.* Ex. viii. 19). Here we might dare to say that the New Testament furnishes theory as well as facts. Still more memorable is Mark ii. 10 (and parallels).

III. Can we, however, vindicate the Protestant position that miracles were a temporary accompaniment of revelation, and therefore have ceased? If that is true, why does not the New Testament say so? But the New Testament makes no such statement.

We frankly grant that the temporariness of the epoch of physical miracles is only a human hypothesis. If anyone prefers to believe that the faith-healings of to-day are real miracles, the New Testament permits him so to believe. Or he may agree with the late Dr. Christlieb, that miracles are given to pioneers in foreign missions ; or with Edward Irving, that the sunken state of the Church is the only reason why 'tongues' and other miraculous signs are absent. Irving's name, however, suggests a warning. To him surely that belief was a snare, and a wrecker's light—a piece of fanaticism, rather than faith, working round rapidly into a new and gigantic Ritualism. And the faith-healings of to-day seem paltry by the side of New Testament miracles. We cannot say to inquirers, 'The lepers are cleansed ; the dead are raised.' We can, however, by God's help do the moral works of Christ. We can enlist our medical knowledge in the service of missions. We can preach the Gospel to the poor. These seem safer credentials for the Christianity of to-day.

While admitting the right of others to judge differently, one inclines to maintain the old Protestant belief that miracles gradually died away, and were meant by God to do so. The New Testament, with its dazzling hopes of the Lord's speedy second coming, had no occasion to define the conditions which should mark a prolonged period of

waiting. But we have learned that God's providence intended a historic Christian dispensation. Therefore we naturally modify the New Testament conception of miracles as some of the 'powers of the world to come'—the beginning of the end of the order of nature. We recognise an epoch of the Incarnation: it is a natural theory that physical miracles were Divinely meant to be concentrated there. Coming at that epoch, they form an outward sign and verification of the stupendous inner fact.

If it was worth Christ's while in His short earthly life to fatigue Himself in physical miracles of healing, is it not worth our while to attend to the fact, to be grateful for it, and to hand on to others, undiminished, the full record of His gracious help to human need, and of His manifold appeal to human faith? So we shall *know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins.*



## VII

### OUTLINES OF GOSPEL CRITICISM

BESIDES miracles of healing, our New Testament tells of other miracles subordinate in significance to the cardinal truth of our Lord's resurrection, *e.g.*, His miraculous birth and the narratives which have been grouped together as Nature miracles. We pass these by, however, for lack of space. And if we pause over questions of Gospel authorship, we do so as the only means of making intelligible the discussion of our next point, *viz.*, the narratives of the Resurrection. But Gospel criticism might well claim notice for its own sake. Every Christian is interested in knowing something of the subject. The Gospels are the fountain-head of our knowledge of Christ. We need the assurance that they tell us substantially of facts and of realities on which we can rely. We need to know something of the current objections taken to them, and of the verdict by which expert opinion sets these objections aside.

The tradition into which we have all grown up, represented by the titles of the books in our English Bibles, tells us that two Gospels are by Apostles—St. Matthew and St. John, and two by companions of Apostles—St. Mark and St. Luke. These statements are, of course, nothing more than a tradition\*—early as reckoned from our time,

\* Such an account as Tischendorf's 'When Were. our Gospels Written?' will be accepted to-day by few well-informed scholars.

but somewhat late in comparison with the date of the Gospels themselves. Ancient authors (especially Semitic authors) did not sign their works as moderns mostly do. When we seek for a really primitive tradition, we get it in part from Papias, an early disciple, who is quoted by Eusebius, the distinguished Bishop and Church historian of the fourth century. Papias had met with many who knew the personal disciples of Jesus, and preferred what he calls 'a living and abiding voice' to any Christian books. He loved to inquire from his older friends 'what was said by Andrew, Peter, or Philip; what by Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or any other of the disciples of our Lord; what was said by Aristion and the Presbyter John, disciples of the Lord.' Still, on occasion, he tells us something about New Testament books. Mark, he tells us, was 'Peter's interpreter,' and wrote his Gospel accurately from recollections of Peter's preaching and teaching, 'not, however, in order.' Matthew also composed a record of what Papias calls 'the Logia'—literally 'the Oracles'—but 'in the Hebrew dialect,' *i.e.*, probably in Aramaic (Syriac), and 'everyone interpreted them as he was able.' Papias tells us nothing (or Eusebius quotes nothing from him) about Luke. No critic, however, doubts that 'the beloved physician' had something to do with the books that have come to bear his name. He was too obscure a man otherwise to be reported as their author. Radical and destructive critics believe that Luke was the author of the 'travel document' or '*We* sections' in the Book of Acts, and that some later writer, who was the compiler of our third Gospel, also wove selections from the precious 'travel document' into his history of the Apostles. The question is more important in its bearing on Acts than in its bearing on the third Gospel, where, confessedly, the author is dependent on authorities (*cf.* his prologue,

Luke i. 1-4), but the best English opinion holds strongly to the authorship of the whole by Luke. This is notably the case with Professor W. M. Ramsay, who has done such brilliant service to apologetics, somewhat marred by a tendency to exaggerate. All men with a theme to carry through, whether critics or apologists, are apt to overload their premises; but Professor Ramsay's work will contribute elements of the highest value to history and to theology. There remains John's Gospel. Papias appears in Eusebius as a witness for the First Epistle, but not for the Gospel; it was less contested. The case of the fourth Gospel differs from the other three. It is put forward as the work of an eye-witness (xix. 35; cf. also xxi. 24, '*we know*,' not '*he knoweth*'—perhaps an editorial addition). Reading between the lines, we cannot doubt that John the son of Zebedee is indicated as the eye-witness in question. Practically, though not formally, this is signed work. If its testimony is genuine, it gives us overwhelming evidence for miracles and for the substance of the Gospel. If we had to abandon this testimony as false, our loss would be very grave.

Let us try to dispose of the fourth Gospel before entering on the complicated problems of the other three. Any standard commentary—*e.g.*, Westcott or Reynolds—tabulates a mass of evidence that the book both *claims to be* and *must be* by a Jew, a Palestinian Jew, an eye-witness, an Apostle—St. John. One very delicate 'watermark' may be mentioned. All the other Gospels call the Baptist 'John the Baptist'; the fourth Gospel calls him simply 'John.' It would be a very subtle forger indeed who should hit upon that guarantee for his genuineness—that striking indication that he whose testimony we have in this book was himself the other great John of New Testament times.

Still, the book is a strange one. Christ's discourses in it

are of a different style and manner from that usual in the Synoptics, though there are analogies to it (Matt. xi. 27 ; x. 40). Further, the same style and manner appears in the speeches of the Baptist as given in the fourth Gospel, and in the disquisitions of the author himself, whether in the Gospel or in his Epistles. The framework of events is different too. As far as we gather from the Synoptics, we should hardly suppose that Jesus visited Jerusalem during His public ministry before the Passover season at which He suffered. It is possible, judging from the Synoptics merely, to estimate our Lord's ministry at one year. John gives us our dates, implying a period of three years or two according as the unnamed feast in chap. v. was or was not a Passover. Moreover, the events narrated in John are predominantly, though not exclusively, Judean. Galilee, which is almost everything in the Synoptics, is hardly anything in John.

Can this be historical? An answer seems to be found in a Synoptic passage (Matt. xxiii. 37 ; Luke xiii. 34). If Jesus had 'often' wished to gather into safety the children of Jerusalem, He must often have visited the city, often preached there. Internal probability points in the same direction. *We infer accordingly that the first three Gospels give us not the naked truth but special Galilean recollections.* The fourth Gospel, if it leans almost as strongly in the other direction, does so in all probability by deliberate choice, in order to right the balance. Even radical critics now tend to admit an element of historical tradition in it, though they deny John's authorship. Again, even orthodox scholars now admit that the discourses are tinged by the mind of the evangelist, while he *may* have caught his mood and accent from some of the sayings of Christ. A Bampton lecturer, Dr. Watkins, speaks of John as 'translating' the Master's teaching into his own phraseology.

There is an approach towards agreement, if complete agreement is far off, or perhaps is impossible between believers in miracle and its deniers.

We turn now to the Synoptic Gospels—a bad name, but one that will never be got rid of. It means simply those Gospels which concur in the same general view of events. Their problem, we may almost say, is the problem of Mark. Does his Gospel come first or third? His material is almost entirely repeated by Matthew, or by Luke, or by both. If, then, Mark is a later compilation, it is of very little value indeed. All the little graphic touches for which it is so remarkable must be regarded as a literary trick. On the other hand, if Mark is earlier than the others, it is a first-rate authority; and so the testimony of Papias represents it.

The modern critical discussion takes its rise in the Tübingen school, headed by F. C. Baur. According to his theory, the whole Primitive Church joined in the quarrel between Judaisers and Paulinists, and the Gospels are party documents ruled by party spirit and tendency rather than by reverence for truth or fact. Matthew was a Jewish-Christian or Petrine Gospel, earlier and more reliable than the other Synoptics, but not by any means very reliable or very historical. Next came Marcion's Luke, a Pauline or Gentile-Christian Gospel in extreme opposition to Matthew. But the hostile parties in the Church were drawing together, and so Mark was prepared by way of extract from the other two, exhibiting no 'tendency,' but rather 'a colourless neutrality,' and constituting a record which all parties could use. Latest of all, of course—immensely later, and very unhistorical, according to Baur—was John. It was further supposed that when the Catholic Church was fairly set agoing, it adopted not only the 'colourless neutrality' Gospel of Mark, but the partisan Gospels (as Baur con-

sidered them) of Matthew and Luke, along with John, thus including everything in its grand armoury.

The same view of Mark's relation to Matthew and Luke had been held by others in less odious form—*e.g.*, by Griesbach, the great New Testament scholar. It became, however, a burning question in connection with the Tübingen theories. Since Baur's time the course of criticism has been one steady retreat from Baur's dates and from Baur's sweeping denials of historicity. Discoveries have been made and have gone against the Tübingen school. Baur, *e.g.*, refused to admit that Tatian's Diatessaron *could* have been a harmony of our four Gospels; the book has now turned up, and, of course, proves to be nothing else. Questions have been debated further, and decided against Baur. Thus, he held that our Luke was a doctored churchly version of the Gospel of Marcion the Gnostic. Everyone now admits—even Hilgenfeld and other living disciples of Baur—that the Church Fathers were right in affirming that Marcion had doctored the canonical Gospel of Luke. Finally, there has been an immense movement of critics, orthodox and rationalist, in favour of the testimony borne by Papias. Thus Mark has been reinstated as the oldest of the four Gospels. And thus, too, the Apostle Matthew has been recognised, if not strictly as an evangelist, yet as the editor of a collection of our Lord's discourses, which, along with Mark's Gospel, formed the principal, though not the exclusive, materials of our first and our third Gospels. There are many outstanding and debated questions. How much narrative matter, in addition to discourses, may we fairly carry back to Matthew's *Logia*? Some, at least. Have we Mark exactly in the original form? Present-day opinion inclines decidedly to say, Yes. Did Mark use the *Logia*? Bernhard Weiss, the eminent 'mediating' theologian and critic,

says so, but has not gained many supporters. Have we, one might ask, satisfactorily accounted for the strong Galilean colour of the first three Gospels? Others will still cling to Gieseler's view (the view of Westcott, of Godet formerly, of Wright), according to which oral tradition by itself explains the resemblances and divergencies of the three Synoptics. Still, on the whole, the 'two-source' theory, as it is called, seems likely in its main outlines to hold its ground. And if it does, Christians can only rejoice. They have the real old tradition vindicated, and they are brought very near the tradition even of their English Bibles. And such a literary analysis, though pointing us to primary historical 'sources' antecedent to our Luke or to our Matthew, makes caprices of criticism like Baur's no longer possible. The Gospels have *not* been written up to the requirements of a party programme. They are a serious reproduction of good early tradition and historical recollections. To say nothing of John, one primary source—Mark—is in our hands, and we can perhaps reconstruct much of the earliest *Logia* Gospel. In the shape in which it stands in our Bibles the Gospel record, if not infallible (which it can hardly be if the 'two-source' theory is correct), is, nevertheless, on a broad view very thoroughly reliable. That is all we need.

Gospel criticism, then, gives us St. Mark, and probably St. Luke and St. John as evangelists, with St. Matthew as the guarantor of some of our most precious materials. It gives us two sets of complimentary early Gospel traditions—the Galilean recollections of the Synoptics, and the Judean recollections predominant in John. It points out, further, that Luke's Gospel is in some respects a link between the two traditions, if only because Luke assigns a great deal of material peculiar to himself to a slow journey of which he tells, from Galilee southwards to Judea and

Jerusalem by way of Perea. And of course John also, while mainly Judean, tells us of a northern ministry exercised by 'Jesus of Nazareth.'

One thing more should perhaps be added. Students of the Revised Version are aware that the last twelve verses of Mark have every appearance of being a later addition, the original conclusion of the Gospel having probably been lost. Apparently the author of these twelve verses knew the other Gospels. His statement does not indeed exactly agree with what they furnish, but it comes so near that it might well have seemed simply a partial echo of the conclusion of Luke, with touches from John and Matthew. So many had held. A year or two since, however, Mr. F. C. Conybeare, of Oxford, that distinguished and versatile scholar,\* found in an Armenian manuscript of Mark's Gospel a marginal gloss attributing the last twelve verses to one Ariston. The manuscript itself is not extremely old—it belongs to the tenth century—but such a tradition in all probability must have been early. Later times would not note the difference between the twelve verses and what precedes; nor would they question St. Mark's authorship. Mr. Conybeare thinks the statement worthy of all attention. In his belief the Ariston meant is probably no other than the primitive disciple Aristion mentioned by Papias. Some of the best German scholars look with a very favourable eye upon Mr. Conybeare's suggestion, and are inclined to agree with him that, not improbably, the Last Twelve Verses come from Aristion. Thus, if we cannot claim that we have full testimony to the Resurrection from Mark, we have perhaps gained an early and independent witness of great value to that supremely important fact.

To the study of that fact we must next proceed.

\* Well known to some as the author of masterly articles on the Dryfus case in the *National Review*.



## VIII

### THE NARRATIVES OF OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION

LIKE the Gospels generally, the narratives of our Lord's resurrection—or rather, strictly, of the post-resurrection appearances—divide strangely into two—a Galilean record, which puts all its emphasis upon a great meeting between Jesus and His disciples in Galilee; and a Jerusalem record, which tells of several appearances in or near Jerusalem. The line of division, however, does not run quite as in the Gospel narrative generally. Instead of contrasting Matthew, Mark, and Luke with John, we have now to contrast Matthew and Mark with Luke. It is Luke who sharply and definitely presents an exclusively Jerusalem tradition. John's Gospel comes in as an oversman, or reconciler, telling chiefly of appearances at Jerusalem (ch. xx.), but adding in an appendix the account of a memorable appearance in Galilee (ch. xxi.). Another witness of the highest importance is St. Paul, in 1 Cor. xv. 3-8.\* We shall argue

\* As a document, 1 Cor. xv. is, of course, older than any Gospel. Complete statement of Christian evidences would require one to lay stress on the historical value of St. Paul's epistles as bearing early testimony to the existence of Christianity; also to deal with attacks on the 'genuineness' of Epistles. Earliest—and in so far most valuable—are 1 and 2 Thessalonians; next come the mighty group, most powerful in contents, unchallenged by any sane criticism—Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans; next the 'captivity' Epistles, almost as powerful, almost as widely received—Philippians, Colossians, Phile-

that he also encourages us to believe in appearances of the risen Saviour in both regions—alike at Jerusalem and in Galilee. The testimony of the 'Last Twelve Verses' of Mark occupies a rather more ambiguous position. On the face of it, it reinforces the purely Jerusalem tradition of Luke. If, however, the compiler was acquainted with the first Gospel—compare Mark xvi. 15, 16 with Matt. xxviii. 19—he must have known of the appearance in Galilee; and in point of fact, the great appearance, as recorded in the 'Last Twelve Verses,' is dateless. No sign of place is attached to it.

A brief table will make the state of the case plainer:

- I. Galilean tradition, Mark xvi. 1-8 (*cf.* xiv. 28);  
Matt. xxviii. (*cf.* xxvi. 32).
- II. Jerusalem tradition, Luke xxiv. (with Acts i.  
1-12); Mark xvi. 9-20 (?).
- III. Twofold tradition, (a) John xx. and xxi.; (b) Paul,  
1 Cor. xv.; (c) ? 'Last Twelve Verses'  
(Mark xvi. 9-20) (Aristion ?).

By 'Galilean tradition,' we mean a view of our Lord's resurrection which knows of actual appearances and interviews *only in Galilee*; but as soon as we have stated this definition, we see that such a thing as a purely Galilean tradition hardly exists. It may, indeed, be said that the genuine portion of Mark gives us such a tradition. We have to remember, however, that in so saying we are speaking of a fragment; and even that fragment—like all our evidence—tells us that Christ actually *rose* in Jerusalem. This is implied even in the extremest Galilean tradition—'*I will go before you into Galilee.*' Hence, the New

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mon, Ephesians. The last group is the Pastorals; their Pauline authorship is more open to doubt.

Testament entirely refuses to encourage the sceptical or anti-miraculous construction of the Resurrection, viz., that visions in Galilee, some time after Christ's death, reconstituted the Christian Church—visions authentic or spurious, reliable or unreliable, divinely sent, or the product of a diseased brain. Both interpretations occur—but both unite to disconnect the visions from Jerusalem, the third day, and the empty tomb. Now, all our New Testament authorities—Paul included—insist on the connection. Paul is appealed to by the anti-miraculous theorists as giving simply a list of visions; but Paul tells us that 'Christ rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.' And Paul clearly implies that these significant early visions (including the vision to himself on the Damascus road) differed from ordinary 'visions and revelations of the Lord.' Such things accompanied Paul through all his Christian life; but the resurrection-vision, properly so called, occurred 'last of all,' when Saul the persecutor 'saw' and owned his Lord (*cf.* 1 Cor. ix. 1).

The Jerusalem tradition, as defined by Luke, is much more sharply exclusive of appearances elsewhere. The promise of reunion in Galilee (Matt. xxvi. 32; Mark xiv. 28) is omitted in Luke's context; and when he meets with the reference to that promise on the lips of the angels—for the angels of the Resurrection and even, according to Matt. xxviii. 10, the risen Lord Himself reassert it—Luke gives the words a different turn: 'Remember ye not how He said unto you *while He was still in Galilee?*' Luke, filled with a sense of the importance of the interviews with the Church as such in Jerusalem, is not inclined to regard favourably the insistence on Galilee which characterizes the Northern tradition. Perhaps he does not believe in any visit to the North—'Tarry in Jerusalem until ye be endued with power.'

When we consider that the main portion of the Johannean narrative, and perhaps also the 'Last Twelve Verses' of Mark, emphasize Jerusalem, we shall not wonder that an attempt has been made to vindicate the Jerusalem tradition at the expense of the Galilean. This has been done by Professor Loofs, of Halle, a very distinguished Church historian and critic, and a man of reverent Christian mind, while not what we call in this country orthodox. Professor Loofs's views must be studied in their connection. They represent a striking and valuable reaction against the Galilean vision theory of Christ's resurrection; and they have drawn from Professor Harnack, perhaps the greatest living theological scholar, the remark that *he* also is impressed with the historicity of something implied in the record of the empty grave upon the third day. Such utterances from such men are welcome reinforcements to the Christian and believing side of the argument. We shall try, however, to go further than these friends accompany us, and to defend the essential historical truth of both narratives—Northern and Southern, Galilean tradition and Jerusalem tradition.

We must first dwell a little longer on the nature of the New Testament narratives.

Not one of these corresponds to our modern requirements. Not one does what any complete 'Life of Christ' written to-day would certainly attempt. We should propose to include all appearances of the risen Lord, to put them in chronological sequence, to explain in a continuous narrative the development of events. No New Testament writer does this, not even St. Paul, who comes nearest doing so. He gives a list only of appearances to *Apostles*; and thus the earliest appearance of all (to the women, or perhaps, rather, to Mary Magdalene) falls out. In our judgment, Mary Magdalene's witness is as good as any

man's witness; but Paul and John thought differently. Even John xxi. is counted only (verse 14) as a *third* appearance of the risen Saviour, though John xx. has recorded (including the appearance to Mary) three appearances already. Why? John, like Paul, was counting appearances to Apostles—to ten, to eleven, to seven. Paul, with a different purpose, records appearances not only before a group of Apostles, but before individuals. Naturally! He wished to conclude with the appearance of Christ to one single individual, the least and greatest of all Apostles; but his interest goes no further. He has a strong view of what constitutes woman's proper place, and prefers not to include among his proofs of the Resurrection an appearance to any woman. The Gospels make room for it, but almost by accident. It is for them an interesting episode, and nothing more.

Another illustration of the singularity (from our point of view) of New Testament historiography appears when we compare Luke xxiv. with Acts i. So far as the former record tells us, *one day* might have sufficed for the manifestations of the risen One and (probably) for His ascension. Yet the same author, writing in Acts, tells us plainly that the interviews went on for some considerable time—in round numbers, and using a consecrated figure, for *forty days*. Cf., e.g., Exod. xxiv. 18; Matt. iii. 2.

Again, how strangely does Luke make us acquainted with a fact of surely crucial importance, Christ's appearance to Peter—to the man who had denied Him, but who was yet to serve as the 'rock' on which the Church should be built! Only in incidental fashion does it come to light that 'the Lord hath appeared unto Simon' (xxiv. 34).

Again, it appears incredible that anyone knowing of the solemn farewell interview of the Ascension should omit it.

John omits it, and yet there are at least two distinct references to it in his Gospel—'I ascend unto My Father and your Father.' 'What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascending where He was before?' (John xx. 17; vi. 62).

We must not, therefore, apply modern Western standards to those artless records which convey to us the great facts on which our faith rests. We must beware of pressing the argument from silence. We must ask, What did the New Testament chroniclers aspire to do? They sought *to give us adequate certainty, through the witness of chosen Apostles, that Christ was alive after death* (compare Acts i. 2, 3; John xx. 31). If they were upbraided for omitting interesting accessory matter, they replied with pathetic admissions of literary helplessness (John xxi. 25; cf. John xx. 30). These are touching words, very significant, however, in their bearing on our subject. Each Gospel gives us an impressive tableau, notably Matthew, notably, too, 'Aristion.' None gives us a complete chronological panorama.

Let us now appeal away from the rival traditions to an oversman, and first to John.

We may begin by referring to a discrepancy not already mentioned—a discrepancy in the records of the first Easter Sunday. Matthew tells us that our Lord appeared to the women; Luke and Mark (so far as we have him) say nothing of the kind. In John we find the deeply interesting explanation that Christ appeared to *one* of the little band of women. With 'Touch Me not' (John xx. 17) compare 'They held Him by the feet' (Matt. xxviii. 9). Here, then, John slightly corrects Matthew's record. One woman, one heartbroken woman, saw the Lord—not two. Again, with Matt. xxviii. 10 compare John xx. 17, 'I ascend unto My Father and your Father.' Is this not another correction? John sympathizes with Luke in deprecating

the excessive emphasis laid on Galilee. Not mainly in Galilee, but in heaven, that true place of reunion, He was urgent that we should seek Him.

Passing into chapter xxi., we find it to be of the nature of an appendix, occasioned by a mistaken belief that John had been promised survival till the Lord's return. He thinks he can trace that belief to *something said to him at an interview in Galilee after the Resurrection*: and therefore he tells us the truth about the interview in question. How unexpectedly this corroborates Matthew and Mark! In the light of this corroboration,\* is it not reasonable to hold that the Galilean interview is historical fact, and that the Apostles had really been bidden to become sharers in it, and for that end temporarily to travel North? Is not its *truth* the simplest explanation of the origin of the Galilean Resurrection tradition? John does not tell us how or when Jesus parted with the seven. May He not on the same day have had a meeting with a larger number? 'Some doubted,' says Matthew. This can hardly refer to the eleven, unless it is a shadowy recollection of the temporary unbelief of Thomas. Perhaps there was a large circle of disciples present; some of these may have been unsatisfied.

We may next appeal to St. Paul as oversman. And first of all we notice that his list—our earliest testimony to the appearances of the risen Lord—presupposes a long series of such interviews, not merely the events of one day. Next, if we assume that he has run together *two* interviews with 'the twelve' (really *the eleven*, or ten of them), which, according to St. John, were separated by a week, then the

\* Professor Loofs does not seem to allow for the significant fact that the Galilean record of John xxi. comes to us, to say the least, out of the Johannean cycle of traditions—that the fourth Gospel *is* on both sides in the dispute.

beginning of Paul's testimony is in very close harmony with what we have learned regarding *Apostles* in Luke xxiv. and John xx. Then we come to the interview with 'more than five hundred brethren.' Where could that take place? According to St. Luke, who has no motive for minimizing, the number of the Jerusalem believers after the Resurrection was about 120 (Acts i. 15). Surely it is only in Galilee, where Christ's friends and converts mostly lived, that we can look for a gathering of 500. *This* may have been the interview which crowned the day that began with the miraculous draught of fishes (John xxi.); this may have been the Galilean farewell. For, as far as we can dare attempt to interpret the motives of the risen Lord, love to His Galilean friends *would* lead Him to assemble them once more for a happy and solemn farewell—for a transition from His visible to His spiritual presence.

Then follows in St. Paul's account another interview with 'the twelve.' This may have been the Jerusalem farewell known to us as 'the Ascension.' Last of all, Paul adds the wonderful interview on the Damascus road.

We may claim, then, that both Paul and John favour a combination of the two traditions—a combination which, indeed, is already hinted at, if not begun, in the Galilean records. 'Aristion' favours the same combination if he presupposes our Gospel of St. Matthew, though not otherwise. Comparing John's record with Paul's, we seem to arrive at as full and exact a harmony as we had reason to expect in the detail of the different appearances: (1) to Cephas; (2) to 'the twelve'; [(3) to 'the twelve again']; (4) in Galilee; (5) to James; (6) at the Ascension.

Only one other problem perhaps deserves a word—the problem of our Lord's resurrection body. Here we are in a region where mystery is sure to meet us. How can we while immersed in earthly life expect to comprehend the



nature of the life immortal? Yet it is our dearest hope, our God-given hope in Christ, that death is not the end of our communion with our Lord, that *death is gain*, that we ourselves shall one day wear a mysterious spiritual body.

We have seen what strong evidence we have for the historicity of the fact of the empty grave. On the third day Christ arose. Verbally he had predicted His resurrection '*after three days*' (in a short space of time, cf. Hosea vi. 2). In spite of the verbal discrepancy, the disciples believed in His rising the third day, *because He rose then*. We have still another proof. A record much more significant than words—the Christian Lord's Day—testifies to, the fact that Christ 'rose from the dead according to the Scriptures' on the first day of the week.

Thereafter we find Him appearing and disappearing suddenly, even 'when the doors were shut.' We should most naturally regard this as made possible by His now possessing a changed, a spiritual, body.

The alternative would be to suppose that Christ's body was not spiritualized (or not fully spiritualized?) till the Ascension, and that He entered closed rooms by miracle. This seems less satisfactory. One hardly knows what 'by miracle' means in such a connection.

Opposed to our view is St. Luke's assurance\*—which was a very serious matter of conviction with him (Acts x. 41; Luke xxiv. 43)—that Christ ate with His disciples after His resurrection. May we regard this as a too materializing error? John, who stood nearer the facts, *also* records that Jesus put the question, 'Have ye any

\* Perhaps this is the reason why Dr. Westcott's 'Gospel of the Resurrection' seems sometimes to suggest a gradual spiritualizing of the Redeemer's risen body, sometimes a gradual revelation of a new spiritual fact. Can two such divergent conceptions be fittingly combined? Is the first really thinkable?

meat?' (compare John xxi. 5 with Luke xxiv. 41); but he does not tell us that Christ joined in the meal which He had provided for His weary friends. A misunderstanding of the question recorded by John might readily lead to the narration of the incident as we have it in Luke.

## IX

### THE ARGUMENT FROM PROPHECY

IN the early days of Church history, if ever apologetic arguments were put in shape and the tide of rhetoric receded, the argument from prophecy became more prominent than any other. Miracles—perhaps we should say *other* miracles—were comparatively little urged. There were many fraudulent pagan miracles in circulation, and the Christian advocates may for that reason have hesitated to adduce the Christian miracles. At least, it is very generally supposed that the taint attaching then to the miraculous was the cause of a reticence which sometimes surprises us.

Last century, which witnessed the greatest outburst of logical reasonings in favour of Christianity, had a different tale to tell. At that time the argument from miracle was deliberately pushed to the front, and prophecy, fulfilled prophecy or prediction, was included as a subordinate species of miracle.

We have lived to see another change. The moral and experimental evidences of Christianity seem to us the most important of all, and the most adequate to support a spiritual and evangelical faith. The argument from prophecy, again, has undergone a change through the progress of Old Testament criticism and of the scientific study of Old Testament history. Sundry men of note, some of them conservative enemies of criticism, others the most

extreme among its radical supporters, tell us that criticism kills the argument from prophecy. Perhaps, however, it is not killed, but rather changed and rejuvenated. It has moved away from the argument from miracle and moved nearer the argument from history—nearer the moral and experimental proof of Christianity. It is now not so much a group of miraculous coincidences between prediction and fulfilment. It is rather a study of the developing Divine thought in human minds, of one developing God-given hope in prophetic souls, and in the souls of those to whom the prophets spoke. Such is the view that will be offered for acceptance here.

In the first place, we may observe that predicting was not the only, nor perhaps the chief, business of the prophets. They did not speak in order that we might construct arguments from prophecy in the nineteenth or twentieth Christian century; they spoke to the men of their own time and land, that these might learn to do God's will and walk with Him. The prophets were primarily forthtellers—only secondarily and subordinately foretellers. Next, we may observe that even those who, like ourselves, frankly defend miracle may hesitate to fight the battle of miracle in connection with prophetic inspiration. Let us rather, if possible, waive the point here. We have not proved that all God's redemptive activities are technically 'miraculous,' and we should find it particularly hard to demonstrate miracle in the psychological region where prophecy arises. A miracle is that which is *impossible* to nature. Who can say what is or is not 'possible' to the 'unaided' mind? It is proverbially difficult to prove a negative; and the mind of man is a great deep. There are other difficulties also. Bible prediction involves a moral element which makes for uncertainty. Some threats—*i.e.*, some *predictions*—are unfulfilled because the guilty

repented betimes. That is part of the burden of the Book of Jonah; it is also clearly taught in Jer. xviii. This complicates the issue, and makes it impossible to prove the Divine origin of Scripture prophecy by simply comparing detailed prediction with detailed fulfilment, and exhibiting a miracle of foreknowledge. Again, it is certain that *partial* fulfilment often pointed on to deeper fulfilment; that also points us away from mere details of form to the essence and substance of prophecy—a thing which eludes mechanical tests. It is even possible that in some cases the prophet erred. Perhaps we have the confession of an unfulfilled prediction in Ezek. xxix. 18 (*cf.* chap. xxvi.). We must find some better way of proving that the prophets were taught of God and led by His Spirit.

In the next place, it does not follow that the only way in which the apologist can make use of prophecy is by studying its New Testament fulfilment. Fulfilment is, indeed, our *chief* interest, the whole many-sided fulfilment of the Old Testament (which is also a transcendence of the Old Testament) in Jesus Christ. But prophecy itself, regarded merely as a phenomenon internal to the Old Testament religion, bears plainly upon its front the seal of God. *Prophecy is moral.* Speaking roughly, we may say that the first great lesson of the prophets is 'to do justly and love mercy, and walk humbly with God,' a message which earned the commendation of the late Professor Huxley; for the sake of Huxley's memory, one is glad to remember the fact. But forthwith, almost as soon as we grasp this message, we find ourselves forced on from forthtelling to foretelling, to prediction and fulfilment, though not as yet to Christian fulfilment. The first great *prediction* of the Old Testament prophets is a great doom—the doom of exile; as if they said to their hearers, 'You have so failed to keep God's laws and do God's will that, as a nation, you

must cease to be.' There is no favouritism with God towards His own people—the very contrary of that. 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities' (Amos iii. 2). Who but the real God—the God of our inmost heart, the God of righteousness and love—could utter such a threat? *Here* is apologetic proof from the Old Testament itself. And the doom was fulfilled—here is further proof; still, so far, within Old Testament limits.

But, thirdly, prophecy is no mere moral code: it reveals a hope in God, the covenant God, the merciful. It is not content to threaten; it promises. And if the characteristic threat of the Old Testament God is exile, the characteristic prophetic promise is restoration. And that also is fulfilled within the Old Testament, though in pale colours, in bare outline, in sad scantiness, without the glamour and the glory of victorious redeeming love which prophets had promised, which Christ Jesus has accomplished and is accomplishing.

This last point, therefore, is plainly the *point d'appui* for a Christian apologetic study of prophecy in the light of fulfilment. At the present moment it is difficult to say how many prophecies of salvation we may securely build on as early prophecies. Our advanced critics, having pretty well settled the Pentateuch, are now going with a pair of fine scissors over the codex of the prophets. They treat it differently from the Law, not handling it upon broad principles, or detecting solid masses drawn from earlier documents and incorporated visibly in our Scriptures. They rather cut out a verse here and a verse there. The predictions especially of final deliverance are treated as additions of a later time, leaving as the burden of the greatest prophets *nothing but doom*. Now, we cannot claim the right to pass an absolute veto on this newest

critical operation. Nor as apologists do we need to do so. If Amos, or even Hosea (1), or Isaiah only threatens—Isaiah's early prophecies are supposed to be threats directed against Northern Israel—there is, even in that solemn moral threatening, a proof that the God of the conscience speaks through the prophets. And it is not denied that hope of deliverance arose *some time*. For us, as Christian apologists, it is tolerably indifferent whether God gave His promises through Isaiah or through some later unknown messenger, provided the message was given and was received. Nevertheless, some apologists, speaking not as Old Testament experts but as believers in God, have the deepest distrust of a theory which supposes that *at any time* God confronted His sinning and suffering children with a message of mere doom.

Stating the *Christian* argument from *fulfilment* more directly, we should proceed somewhat as follows; and let it be noted that our argument is singularly little concerned with coincidences between details of prediction and details of fulfilment, or with the views critics may take of individual passages in the Old Testament.

First, looking back on the Old Testament from the standpoint of faith in Christ, we claim the whole as *a preparation for Christ*. Its moral drill and stern moral lessons are among the beginning of that revelation which was perfected in the Son. All through the Old Testament we see tentative approaches towards the marvellous fellowship between God and man which Christ secures.

But, secondly, the Old Testament consciously looks forward. Its golden age is more in the future than in the past. Sooner or later (if so much must be granted) yet, sooner or later, it learns the lesson of a passionate faith in the unexhausted mercies of God and His deeper purposes of good. If partial fulfilments disappoint, the friends of God

look forward—still forward! Their exegesis—*e.g.*, Daniel's exegesis of Jeremiah (Dan. ix. 21)—may not appear to us correct, but this is correct, that in the darkest hour faith clings to God and to the *future accomplishment of a promised full salvation*.

Thirdly, the Old Testament hope takes various concrete forms—alternative pictures, or supplementary pictures. How they are to come together in harmony is one of the problems left by the Old Testament for the future—left for the Fulfiller. In any full statement of apologetics one ought to try to name *all* these, and show how they emerged successively in connection with the God-given and Divinely-interpreted circumstances of the nation's history. Here we must be content with a humbler statement, naming those forms of the hope which were of outstanding importance, and simply laying these side by side, over against each other, over against Christ.

(a) Of outstanding significance is *the hope of a supremely great and good King*—a 'son of David,' with an undefined nimbus of Godlike glory about His head. Recent critical study\* regarded Isaiah as the historic originator of this hope; the advanced wing of critics here, as usual, is muttering its talisman, 'Post-exilic.' *Anyhow, the hope providentially arose.* Probably the shallowest rather than the deepest, spiritually, of the noteworthy phases of the Old Testament hope, it was of immense importance historically in connection with the recognition of Jesus as the world's Saviour and King. Jesus was 'Christ,'† that was the first Christian creed. 'Christ' meant Saviour-King.

\* *E.g.*, Dr. Driver. See 'Isaiah: His Life and Times.'

† Jewish theology used the term before our Lord's day. On the other hand, the term is hardly to be traced to the Old Testament. In its proper sense Dan. ix. 25, 26 probably does not refer to 'the Messiah.' See R.V.



(b) In the second half of Isaiah, and especially in Isa. liii., we have the profound picture of God's suffering Servant bringing deliverance to others by the endurance of undeserved pain. The prophet undoubtedly had in view the righteous kernel of Israel. Whether he had not also in view some one great figure, historical (a type of Christ; some have guessed Zerubbabel) or ideal (a new and deeper conception of the destined Saviour), that is keenly debated to this hour. At any rate, God meant Isa. liii. to apply to Christ, and Christ is its one true Fulfiller.

(c) Another of the deepest Old Testament prophecies is that of the 'new covenant' (Jer. xxxi.). It is almost equivalent to saying 'a new religion'—a marvellous thing for any Old Testament prophet to announce. 'Old Testament,' 'New Testament'—the whole framework, or at least the whole backbone of Christian theology—is here given us ready-made. A new religion, verily: 'Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.'

(d) In a different department of things the hope of personal immortality arose—or came out of shadow into sunshine—taking the form of an expectation of bodily resurrection to life on earth in the blessed days when death itself should die (Isa. xxiv.-xxvii. ; Dan. xii. 2).

Fourthly and finally, we see in Christ not the mechanical enactment of a foreknown rôle, but a new interpretation of Messiahship, Christ being the co-ordination (and relative subordination) of the various phases of Old Testament hope by One who perfectly knows God, and is led by God into all the truth. Thus He *suffered*, and *rose from death* as the pledge of a *new covenant*, as the firstfruits also of His people's resurrection, and henceforth He is to reign, invisibly or visibly, as *King* at God's right hand. All is not yet fulfilled; there is a Second Advent set before our faith and hope. Its fulfilment may vary from our

expectation even as the First Advent varied from the expectation of devout Israel ; but it will come and not fail.

It is hard to see how believers in Christ can doubt the argument from prophecy. It is hard to see how any that have even a historical knowledge of Christ can question it. Is He not Israel's noblest and truest Son, in whom the glorious past is fulfilled and transcended ? What is history if that be not so ? Christ has summed and superseded the prophetic utterances, proving not to our faith alone, but almost to our vision, that they were (as they claimed to be) God's messengers and His own forerunners.

If the New Testament itself dwells on isolated coincidences (like the birth at Bethlehem), we probably do best to accept them simply as indicating to us a deeper connection between prophecy and fulfilment ; they have happily been styled 'finger-posts.' God's condescending kindness helped weak faith, especially in early ages, by such coincidences. But the essential matter is not Christ's being born here or there—is not any coincidence in external things. The essential matter is Christ's being Christ, and so bringing the fulfilment of Israel's hope and of the world's.

## X

### MORAL DIFFICULTIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

ONE story is good until another is told. We deliver our attack, but we must also remember the necessity of repelling counter-attacks. Else we may find ourselves in the position proverbially assigned to Prince Rupert—winning the skirmish, but losing the battle. Hence it is well that, even in a brief review of apologetics, we should consider some difficulties, some objections. We cannot consider all, but we may take a sample. And the sample selected has the advantage of throwing further light on the real nature of God's revelation as a progressive thing, and on the real nature and use of those Scriptures which permanently record revelation.

Moral difficulties, when they are genuinely felt, not dishonestly feigned, have a peculiar claim to our respect and tender consideration. They emerge as difficulties. The man feeling them is attracted by the Gospel, and wishes to believe, but his conscience will not allow him to suppress the discomfort which he feels in reading the record of certain incidents or the terms of certain alleged Divine commands. Shall we meet with moral difficulties in the New Testament? Conceivably we may; there are spots even on the radiant disc of the sun. The present writer remembers hearing a distinguished living Scottish preacher express his distaste for the Apostle Paul's phraseology in

controversy when he styled Judaisers at Rome *dogs* (Phil. iii. 2), retorting their own usage, and almost in doing so 'rendering evil for evil, railing for railing.' Conceivably this judgment may be right. We do not believe that the Apostles were infallible in conduct; in fact, we know that they were not. Yet they were apostles of Christ, serving Him with loyal hearts. Why must we assume that the Apostles became infallible when they took pen in hand? They may have erred even morally; there may be moral difficulties in the New Testament. Nevertheless, the sun is not mainly characterized by spots, but by its blaze of heavenly light. And the New Testament, before which the centuries have bowed in deep reverence, claims the thankful study of each one of us rather than apology or patronage or undue emphasis on small alleged defects.

The case of the Old Testament is somewhat different. Great as are its claims, its moral difficulties are far from being exceptional or microscopic. They occur in great masses; they are nearly pervasive. And no Christian has a right to forget how much mischief has been done again and again in the course of Christian history by a misuse of Old Testament authority just on those points where the Old Testament is weakest. Persecution and racial cruelty have battered on those pages or those verses. It was not that men revered the Old Testament too much; but they revered it unwisely; and they failed to offer a yet higher reverence, a supreme devotion, to Jesus Christ.

Difficulties of the kind we have in view are summed up by Professor Bruce under four heads, as follows: \* 'those connected with the defective morality of the agents or recipients of revelation; those arising out of [certain questionable] actions represented as being sanctioned and commanded by God; those connected with rudimentary

\* 'Chief End of Revelation,' p. 129.

legislation ; and, finally, those presented in the traces of a legal spirit in the Old Testament literature, strongly contrasting with the evangelic spirit characteristic of the New Testament.' The last seems less likely to perplex than the other three. Could good men be so cruel? Could God's command to the individual, or God's law for His people, require such acts? That is the painful problem forced upon us.

What answer shall we make to these objections? First we may note the old-fashioned answer ; we may fairly label it with a name too often recklessly and unintelligently flung about ; this is the *Calvinistic* answer : *God was within His rights*. Things that would be incompetent, evil, monstrous in man, are normal and inevitable in Nature, are part of the strange working of Nature's God. Did God require Abraham to slay His son? Did God order Joshua and Israel to exterminate the heathen and vicious inhabitants of Canaan? God is the Giver and Lord of life ; God passes just sentence on sin ; He reveals His righteousness, if not altogether His love. *We shall never be able fully to dispense with this apology*. For, on any view we may take of the morally doubtful features (so to call them) of the Old Testament, they come to us in God's book, covered with His toleration, and in some sense, many of them, with His approval. If we cannot allow the Divine rights to extend so far as that, we banish ourselves from the household of faith. Shall we not trust God?

But a second and really a much more fruitful line of thought is found in the *modern* answer : *The things complained of characterize a primitive stage in a progressive human morality and a progressive Divine revelation*. This answer takes many forms. It is found closely combined with the former answer in the late J. B. Mozley's 'Ruling Ideas in Early Ages'—a book of lectures on Old Testament

questions, very powerful and very subtle. Thus, *e.g.*, Mozley holds that the exaggerated ideas of parental rights which prevailed in Abraham's time made it possible for God to elicit from Abraham a splendour of devotion and sacrifice which has no complete analogy outside of the gift and sacrifice of Christ. On the other hand, Mozley resents the suggestion that the incident—more 'advanced' students might prefer to say the *narrative*—was designed to educate Israel out of a state of mind in which it was possible to suppose that God took pleasure in human sacrifice—was designed as a lesson for those like-minded with Jephthah. Others who believe more fully in development from the primitive stage to higher things attach great importance to that thought (*e.g.*, Bruce). They also incline to prize some of the results of Old Testament criticism. There is not, indeed, any necessary connection between the modern answer to the moral doubts awakened by the Old Testament and the modern criticism of the Old Testament. Books are written which are filled with the modern spirit, much more filled with it than Mozley's book is, and which yet never challenge the inherited critical traditions.\* But the two changes go well together. Criticism undertakes to give us a natural account of development. (This need not be naturalistic, nor need the supernatural be the unnatural.) Moral growth along with other forms of growth should thus be set in clearer relief. Still, the vital question here has little or nothing to do with Old Testament criticism. The vital question is, Can we believe in a progressive revelation of the unchanging God—a revelation which, even morally, is content to begin low down? We have strong reason to do so. *That is Jesus Christ's position.* Criticism of the Old Testament in any shape

\* Dr. W. S. Bruce's 'Ethics of the Old Testament' is an example. It is excellent in spirit, but entirely ignores the assertions of criticism.

or form lay very far, we may be sure—and we say this with deep reverence—from His inclinations. Not in that direction did His calling lie. Yet He has formulated for us the far-reaching principle that things occur in the Old Testament which owe their place there to *the hardness of men's hearts* (Matt. xix. 8). We surely make this easier of acceptance when we add that revelation is throughout moving upwards—that, as Professor Bruce tells us, it is gracious in God to begin low—and that, in Mozley's words, 'the end is the test of a progressive revelation.' This answer then concedes that some things complained of are really evil, but adds, they are not too evil for God to tolerate with a view to the highest ultimate good.

A third reply is directly drawn from *criticism*, and, indeed, is due directly to its most *negative* results. It will be doubtful, therefore, to many how far they can legitimately employ such a thought in the service of faith. According to this answer, *many of the alleged facts are idealizations, postulates objectified in the guise of past events, unhistorical legal assumptions*. For instance, critics tell us that one of the oldest 'documents' which they believe to have been used in compiling the Hexateuch knows nothing about an extermination of the Canaanites. If so, when extermination came to be asserted, that was partly due to idealizing the memory of the cruel wars, and partly was a deduction from the more stringent views of the holiness of Israel as a nation which had come into currency. Very often, however, idealization (if it was at work at all) took even more exclusively the shape of imputing an unreal cruelty in the policy of 'thorough' to older generations, or to God Himself. When we read in 1 Sam. vi. 19 that the plague destroyed in a village which had pried into the Ark '70 men, 50,000 men,' we may fairly suppose that the text is at fault, that a foolish gloss has crept in from the margin,

that the original historian expressed himself more reasonably. But when we read in Num. xxxi. that 12,000 Israelites, without the loss of a single man, massacred all the male Midianites and captured 32,000 unmarried women, with scores of thousands of sheep and cattle, and further that by special Divine command they killed all the married women in cold blood, that is unquestionably the original text ; and it may rather relieve us to be told by critics that the whole narrative is late and unhistorical ; idealization, not fact.

Difficulties press most hardly upon those who were trained in a view of the Scripture that is fast passing away. Others hardly feel such difficulties ; they have more to be thankful for in this than they know. Yet everyone has to face some difficulty, some danger. And no difficulty will overthrow a faith that is genuinely rooted in Jesus Christ.



## XI

### TESTIMONY TO CHRIST IN HISTORY AND IN EXPERIENCE

WE have already dealt with the most important contribution made by history to the Christian Evidences in studying the argument from prophecy. It sums up the message which the history of Israel addresses to the thoughtful inquirer who is dealing with the claims of Christ. History elsewhere is not dumb, though it may be less eloquent. Pre-Christian history in the Gentile world says something; post-Christian history says much.

I. It is possible that the religious history of pre-Christian mankind may be shown to converge towards the Gospel of Christ. This has been insisted on by many, by those (like F. D. Maurice, or like his favourite Alexandrians) who love to think of the Logos as 'the light that lighteth every man'; by those (like Archbishop Temple, in 'Essays and Reviews') who try to detect everywhere the merciful 'Education of the Human Race' by the providence and grace of God. Still, this line of thought is a difficult one. The higher you put the non-Christian religions, the less do they seem to be excelled by Christianity. The nearer you suppose that God's Spirit was to all men—and He is not far from each one of us—the less conspicuous or overwhelming seems to be mankind's need of Jesus Christ incarnate, who has said, '*No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.*'

It is less pleasant to dwell upon that preparation for

Christ which is constituted by the world's failure. Yet these are facts. It was a bankrupt world, lost in sin and misery, which Jesus Christ redeemed. Probably we ought to keep in view some positive preparation for Jesus Christ, even in heathendom. But certainly we cannot suppress the eloquent witness borne by the sad negative preparation of which we speak. 'In the wisdom of God the world by its wisdom knew not God.'

II. The evidence of post-Christian history may also be taken in two parts, but differently from the evidence of pre-Christian Gentile history. Christ has founded the Church, and His moral influence has leavened the world to an incalculable degree.

It would have been possible in the abstract for Jesus Christ to commit the results of His mission to the mere leavening influences of a great spiritual personality. But while He is a living and present Spirit He has a body, and His body is the Church. With the intuition of genius, with the wisdom of Divine love, He created the Church by two acts: calling twelve men to represent the new Israel as Apostles of the Lamb, and saying the night before He suffered, '*This do in remembrance of Me.*' Organization is not His work; strangely un-Christlike it has too often been. But that a Church should exist is His choice; He has called it into being and keeps it in being. The frail barque He launched on stormy waters has floated down to us rent and weather-stained, but seaworthy still, and carrying its happy company 'with songs to Zion.' Church organization has done much evil, but also surely much more good. Let us apply some of our abundant charity to the Church of Jesus Christ! Let us remember that, with whatever failings, it is His Church; let us see Him in it! If Jesus Christ is the Divine Redeemer, it would *not* have been possible for Him to remain without a distinct society of

those who worship Him and worship God through Him. The Church, with all its defects, with all its sins, is a witness to each of us that Christ is the Son of God and our Saviour.

Besides the Church as a distinct society, and besides all the leavening influences directly traceable to it, there are other good effects in history due to the action of individual Christian men, sometimes of non-Christians or of those who at the best are unconscious Christians. Humanitarian and philanthropic movements have been claimed with great justice as *Gesta Christi*. We go to human history and try to measure by inductive methods what difference Christ has made in this old world. It is an important part of our evidence; and yet we surely must admit that we never can *prove* Christ's claims in this fashion. A great new moral force came into being or came into manifestation with Jesus Christ. So much we may prove. But how can we ever show from empirical results that this new force was the absolute goodness of God, or that it was a new redeeming power, differing in kind as well as in degree from lesser lights of the world? Nay, have we not our difficulties here? Has Christ done enough? *God sent His Son into the world that the world might be saved.* Is the world saved? Is it so greatly different, with the cruel lust of the rich and the squalor of the slums? This line of argument by itself will not keep our hearts from doubt or even perhaps from denial. And yet we see something of our Master's presence. We are able still to say, '*The darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth.*'

III. The evidence which the Church and history bear to Christ comes nearer us when embodied in holy lives and examples of consecration and inward peace. The cordon is thus drawn tighter round us. Disbelief is harder than ever, and shows graver than ever before.

IV. But the final authority cannot be anything without ; it must be a voice within. It cannot be the most august or even the dearest human authority ; it must be God Himself bearing witness by His Spirit to His Son. *This* is the legitimate prolongation of the evidence of history and of the Church's witness ; this interprets to us all that has gone before. Conscience is our final court of appeal ; conscience is the absolute master of our days, whose service sets us free. Christian evidence reaches us in fulness then, and only then, when God reveals His Son in us, and conscience lays down its authority at Christ's feet—when God shines into our hearts, to show us His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Thus we see the Father and are satisfied. And we need have no fear that this supreme spiritual experience is hallucination. With whatever personal peculiarities, it is essentially the same thing that the Church in all ages has attested. It is the same new song that our fathers and our brothers have sung. We have but 'learned their great language and caught their clear accents' ; the veil has been rent that separated our hearts from their hearts and from God's. We in our turn now *set our seal to this, that God is true.*

The appeal to Christian experience, like other parts of the Christian argument, may take different forms and receive various interpretations. A common interpretation concentrates attention upon conversion.\* 'I have seen God.' 'I have become different from what I was.' 'I had a great experience—nay, more : I have had the greatest experience in life.' Yes, good ; but is not such experience continuous or at the lowest recurrent ? 'That which we

\* So Frank, 'System of Christian Certainty' (translated) ; and so in the main the 'Evidence of Christian Experience' of the lamented Prof. Stearns, so untimely removed from his usefulness, as we judge things when we walk by sight.

have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.' Experience declares not merely 'I saw God,' but 'I see God'; not merely 'I knew God in Christ,' but 'I know Him.' Many things may lead up to this; this is the goal. *This is fellowship with God.* There is no higher certainty, till this mortal has put on immortality and death is swallowed up for ever.

## XII

### POSTSCRIPT ON BOOKS

THOSE readers who wish to go a little further than the threshold of Apologetics may be glad of some hints what to read. Professor Bruce, who has been spoken of above as the best teacher of our time in Apologetics, is at his freshest, and perhaps at his clearest, in his lectures on 'The Chief End of Revelation.' His large textbook on 'Apologetics' is everywhere interesting, and the chapters on the life and teaching of our Lord are a precious possession. That was throughout all his thinking and teaching the favourite subject of Dr. Bruce. To mention only one other of his works, his 'Miraculous Element in the Gospels,' while specially fitted for learned or, at least, for professionally educated readers, is the only book we have that takes up the miracle narratives of the Gospels in detail, and discusses all difficulties frankly. For the miracles connected with our Lord's person, however, we must turn again to the 'Apologetics.'

An important contribution to the discussion of miracles is furnished by Dr. E. A. Abbott's 'Philomythus,' in which the Roman Catholic attempt to level up the 'ecclesiastical miracles' to those of the Gospels is conclusively knocked on the head, and the former are exposed in all their falsity. Thus Dr. Abbott, while not himself fully a believer in the miraculous, has furnished us with weapons against the sceptical party who would level down the Gospel miracles to the rank of Church fables. The same writer's 'Kernel

and the Husk' deserves to be studied by those who can form their own judgment on the points raised.

'The Christian Miracles and the Conclusions of Science,' by the Rev. W. D. Thomson, M.A., is a short book dealing clearly and candidly with the branch of the subject upon which it concentrates itself.

In regard to prophecy, Mr. Brownlow Maitland's little book (published by the S.P.C.K.) is still valuable. A full and very able statement of principles is found in the late Professor Riehm's 'Messianic Prophecy'—Mr. Lewis Muirhead's translation. Riehm was in the full tide of Old Testament criticism; but it is hardly necessary to say that *on critical points* his book does not illustrate criticism (even the criticism of the most cautious and conservative wing of critics) in its present-day form. It is as a theologian and apologist that he holds his ground. We must go to him for principles and not for instances. The best original English work on prophecy is Professor Stanton's 'Jewish and Christian Messiah.' Here again, especially in regard to apocryphal and apocalyptic books, criticism has moved from some of Dr. Stanton's positions; but he has a clear grasp and full mastery of apologetic principles, and speaks (or spoke) his verdict on disputed points with the weight of an expert student. It must be understood that his book, while well written, and pervaded by the finest spirit, is not a work for beginners. Riehm also writes for professional students.

Old Testament difficulties are handled incidentally by Professor Bruce, and also in a popular way by a writer whom Bruce introduced to readers on this side the Atlantic—Dr. Newman Smyth, now well known as the author of a book on 'Christian Ethics.' His 'Old Faiths in New Light' will be found an especially helpful popular book. The ablest discussion of Old Testament difficulties is

J. B. Mozley's. None of the writers of our time have had so much of the weight and mass of Bishop Butler as Mozley at his best, and we have some of his best work in his 'Ruling Ideas of Early Ages.' To study these lectures is an intellectual discipline and enjoyment. Yet Mozley will not always command our agreement; and we may sometimes smile to see him laboriously unravelling knots which the critic's gleaming blade cuts asunder at a single stroke.\*

Butler himself should certainly not be altogether omitted. He is a great man and a grave man, the greatest (not the wisest) of all our apologists, with a rare note of genuine moral indignation—quite a different thing from that personal petulance which often masquerades as anger against sin. Let the student specially study the 'Analogy,' Part I. Butler has a prophet's sense of God's inexorable justice—one of the foundation truths of all wisdom. For the love of God (*God's love*) shed abroad in the heart, we must look to others than to the great Bishop. Yet let us ponder what he says on the Atonement, and let us try to make acquaintance with some of his *Sermons*. The 'Analogy' is terribly tough, but all the more educating. And the grave, candid, solemn human soul of Butler is worth any amount of excavating to reach—past difficulties of style and superficialities of eighteenth-century thought.

On the subjects of the last chapter we may name—with respect, though with no complete agreement—Loring Brace's 'Unknown God' and 'Gesta Christi'; also Uhlhorn on 'Christian Charity' (translated). And we may repeat again the names of Stearns on 'The Evidence of Christian Experience,' and Frank's 'System of Christian Certainty' (translated).

\* Mozley on 'Miracles' shows us the man at his worst. It gives us the bare intellectualism of the eighteenth century, threatening to pass into heartless paradoxes like Mansel's.



Apologetics cannot be crammed. They are not a sum of verities, nor yet of dogmas; they are a spirit and method and point of view. They are the intellectual statement of that certainty which dwells more or less in every Christian heart. They are not the one thing needful. They are neither the first nor the second of the necessities of religion. Yet how good it is to be able 'to give a reason for the hope that is in one'! How pleasant it is to meet a Christian who is thoughtful, who is intellectually awake, not a dear, good, grown-up child! One cannot but believe God also is pleased that we should use mind and conscience, reverently, modestly, trustfully, upon these great themes.

Apologetics cannot be crammed; that is one of their great excellences. They teach a man to use his own mind, not to accept his teacher's opinions. Or, rather, they refer us to one Teacher, the living truth and love of God our Father, who is His own interpreter to every heart that honestly seeks Him. 'Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice.'

May the reader and the writer be found of Him in peace when He who is truth judges us according to truth.

## NOTES

P. 6. 'The earth rests on an elephant,' etc.—Hindu mythology.

P. 6. John Henry Newman, most fascinating of the leaders of the Oxford Tractarian Movement ; afterwards Cardinal in the Church of Rome. His brother, F. W. Newman, became a bare theist, denying the Christian revelation.

P. 10. Thomas Chalmers, brilliant Scottish preacher, pastor, and political economist. One of the best of men. Leader of the Evangelical party in the Scottish Establishment, and Professor of Divinity in Edinburgh University; afterwards founder of the Free Church of Scotland. Died 1847.

P. II. Dr. Agar Beet, well known as a commentator, has also written on Apologetics and Systematic Theology.

P. 13. 'Firm Foundation,' etc., title of Dr. Beet's brief Apologetic Manual.

P. 17. Mention is made of several of Dr. A. B. Bruce's works in the closing chapter.

P. 18. Bludyer, the typical bludgeoning critic. Origin?

P. 18. 'The Hard Church' is a brilliant onslaught on Henry Rogers by the lamented R. H. Hutton, editor of the *Spectator*. It is included in Hutton's 'Theological Essays,' a very fine book indeed. Rogers's best known book, 'The Eclipse of Faith,' was a reply to F. W. Newman's 'Phases of Faith' (see above, on p. 6).

P. 18. Mansel, author of Bampton Lectures on 'The Limits of Religious Thought.' His biography is included in the late Dean Burgon's 'Twelve Good Men.'

P. 18. 'Agnosticism'—denies the possibility of knowing God or absolute truth.

P. 22. 'Essays and Reviews' (1860). Mark Pattison's contribution, referred to in the text, was one of the most valuable. Other contributors were Dr. Temple (see p. 81), Rowland Williams, Professor Baden-Powell (father of the defender of Mafeking), etc. The general cast of the book was very negative, but the panic it caused was excessive and discreditable.

P. 24. The 'return to Christ.' Some have strongly asserted that the need of our age is a return (*e.g.*, from St. Paul) to the direct teaching of Christ. Others strongly deny this.

P. 24. 'The unlit lamp,' etc. From R. Browning's strange and powerful poem 'The Statue and the Bust.'

